

Part One

Chapter I

God Bless You!

‘**G**OD bless you, **Roy!** God bless you!’

As to who they were, or what it was **all** about, I have no idea. I had noticed them standing near me on the Post Office corner, evidently waiting for a tram. He was a massively-built, **middle-**aged man, well-groomed in a becoming grey suit. She was a queenly little thing of twice his age, of singularly attractive countenance and beautiful snow-white hair.

Glancing at an approaching car, he stooped and kissed **her**—smilingly, affectionately, reverentially—and then strode out into the roadway. **But, whilst he** paused **for a moment** to allow a few ladies to precede him, she suddenly rushed to his side, threw her arms round his neck, kissed his cheek, and exclaimed fervently:

‘God bless you, Roy! God bless you!’

The movement of the tram tore them apart; and, since the car immediately behind it was my own, I lost sight of them both. But, somehow, the loveliness of her benediction has lingered with me, like a fragrance, ever since.

God **ble**ss you! Few of our human propensities are more interesting or attractive than the instinct that impels us to bless one another.

I passed by your window in the cool of the night.

The lilies were watching so still and so white;

‘And oh,’ I sang softly, though no one was **near**—

‘Good night and God bless you; God bless you, my dear!’

God **ble**ss you! We say it under all sorts of circumstances and conditions. And the strange thing is that we seldom say it mechanically and formally, as we utter other commonplace and

oft-repeated expressions, but fervently, wholeheartedly and with a real depth of feeling.

I look back to-day on all the weddings that it has been my good fortune to celebrate. From the moment at which the prospective bride first calls at the manse to make arrangements, the minister feels his heart drawn out to her. He takes a personal and intimate and fatherly interest in her and does everything in his power to make her course easy and pleasant. And then, at last, there comes the poignant moment when, the ceremony over, the register signed and all the formalities completed, he takes farewell of her as, on the arm of her proud and happy young groom, she passes out from his presence. I should be sorry for the minister whose heart was not swept by profound emotion at that *critical*

I have always intended to say something really worth while to my dainty little bride as I took farewell of her. But only one thing seemed to come naturally.

'God bless you!' I have exclaimed, as I have pressed her hand before she plunged into a brief hurricane of confetti and a long hurricane of experience, **'God bless** you!' And I have invariably noticed a slight suspicion of moisture mingling with her smiles, and have felt convinced that I had said the right thing after all.

I look back to-day upon all the funeral services that I have conducted in the course of the years. From the moment at which the minister is first informed of the tragedy that has overtaken a familiar home, his deepest sympathies are enlisted. Instinctively, and not merely as a matter of duty, he weeps with those who weep. Then, during the next day or so, he devotes all his thoughts to the task of succouring and comforting the bereaved. And there comes at last the poignant moment when, the funeral over, he takes farewell of the crushed and broken spirit. How often I have made up my mind to say something really helpful to my widowed or orphaned friend in that last final act of parting! But, again, only one thing seemed to come naturally.

'God bless you!' I have exclaimed fervently as I have held and pressed the mourner's hand, **'God bless** you!' And I have invariably

noticed, from the brave smile that shone through the tempest of tears, that it was the best thing that I could possibly have said.

Nobody can explain in so many words what it is that I do when I *breathe* my blessing on my friend. *I* do not know. *He* does not know. Yet *I* am conscious that virtue has gone out of me; and he is conscious that some emanation of my personality has been poured into his soul. May God *bless you!* is the natural expression of all that is best in my heart and it makes an *irresistable* appeal to all that is best in his.

I

Here are four stories—two from literature and two from my own experience. In a very moving passage, James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, speaks of Sir Walter Scott as the best-beloved figure in all the Border country. Many of the farmer folk, Hogg says, almost worshipped him. And then he tells of an incident that beautified and sanctified his own home. Riding over to Ettrick one day on Sibyl Grey, Scott dropped in to dinner at Mount Benger. Before leaving, he smiled affectionately at Mr. and Mrs. Hogg's little daughter, walked round to where she was sitting, took her up in his arms, kissed her, set her down again, and then, laying his hand devoutly on her head, exclaimed fervently and impressively, 'God Almighty bless you, my dear child! God bless you!' After a moment's tense and reverent silence, Scott took his leave, Hogg accompanying him to the stable to help saddle Sibyl Grey. When Hogg returned to the room, he found his wife crying as though her heart would break.

'Why, whatever's the matter?' he inquired in surprise.

'Oh,' she cried, 'I would have given everything that I possess in this world—everything—everything—if only he had done the same to *all* the children!'

My *second* story comes from Devonshire. As a very old man, Cardinal Newman went down into Devonshire to stay with the Pottesons—the family from which John Coleridge Potteson, the Martyr Bishop of Melanesia, had sprung. One morning the aged Cardinal came down late to breakfast. He had asked them not to

wait and they had taken him at his word. As he entered the room, moving slowly toward the vacant place at the table and receiving smilingly the greetings of the family, his eyes became fascinated by a tiny **child**, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, who occupied a high chair immediately opposite his own. The aged prelate stood for a fraction of a moment lost in ecstatic admiration.

‘Isn’t he beautiful?’ he asked. ‘I must give him my blessing!’

He moved softly round to the high chair and laid his two wrinkled hands on the fresh young head of the child. Everybody instinctively rose. And then, after a second’s impressive silence, the Cardinal pronounced a benediction in Latin. Nobody knew exactly the significance of the words uttered; but, as he lifted his hands from the child’s head and quietly took his own seat, there were few dry eyes in the room.

These are the two stories from literature. Now for two from my own experience. Granny, with whom I had to do in my earliest days at Mosgiel, was a pioneer. When the Free Church of Scotland announced its intention of establishing a colony on the virgin shores of New Zealand, Granny and her young husband offered at once for the great adventure. They came out on the very first ship, They landed on a shore on which they would have to deal first-hand with Nature—no tracks, no buildings, no commodities or conveniences of any kind. Not a tree had been felled. **Forty-**seven years later, I myself arrived in New Zealand. By that time a big homestead had sprung up around her, and she sat enthroned in her **cosy** armchair, loved and honoured by her children and grandchildren.

I shall never forget my last visit to her. When I rose from my knees beside her bed, the setting sun was slanting in through her western window. It transfigured her wan face and wandering hair as it fell upon her snowy pillow. As I took her poor thin little hand in mine to say good-bye, a thing happened that I shall remember when all things else have been forgotten.

To my amazement, Granny rose and sat bolt upright. In the glory of the setting sun, she seemed more than human. ‘**Doon!**’ she exclaimed, ‘**Doon!**’ and motioned me to kneel once more by

the bedside. I obeyed her. And, as I knelt, I felt her thin fingers in my hair and I heard her clear **Scots** accents once more.

‘The Lord **blëss** ye,’ she said, in slow and solemn tones. ‘The Lord bless ye and keep ye! The Lord bless ye in your youth and in your auld age! The, Lord bless ye in your basket and in your store! The Lord bless ye in your kirk and in your **hame**! The Lord bless ye in your wife and in your bairns! The Lord bless ye in prosperity and in adversity! The Lord bless ye in your **gaeings** oot and in your comings in from this time forth and even for evermore!’ I have bowed my head to many benedictions in my time, but I have never known another like that. Her frail form completely exhausted, poor Granny sank back heavily on her pillow. In a very little while she had passed beyond the reach of my poor ministries. But I often feel her thin fingers in my hair; and that last blessing will abide, like the breath of heaven, upon my spirit till I shall see her radiant face once more.

The other incident occurred many years later. I was in Sydney and, walking one day down George Street, was suddenly accosted by a clergyman, a perfect stranger to me. When he told me his name, I immediately recognized it as that of a High Anglican of whom I had often heard. He was good enough to say, with evident sincerity and even an approach to emotion, that my books had meant much to him in his life and ministry. After a brief conversation, he asked me if I had time to look through his church. He drove me to it and I spent a pleasant and profitable half-hour within precincts whilst he explained to me the spiritual significance that he attached to the vestments, processions, and genuflections employed in his ritual. When at length I thanked him and extended my hand by way of taking farewell, he begged me to accompany him **once** more to the altar.

‘Will you please kneel?’ he asked, ‘I should so much like to give you my blessing!’ And, as I knelt, he laid his hands upon my bowed head and solemnly pronounced his benediction. It was a little thing, but it strangely moved me at the time and has awakened a wealth of thought and feeling within me in the course of the years that have followed.

II

I like to think that, when Almighty God provided for the blessing of **His people** by His priests, He did not leave it to the caprice of Aaron or of his sons and successors to select the phraseology that should be employed. On *this wise*, **He** said, *shall ye bless the children of Israel*, saying unto them: *The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.*

Is it fanciful to assume that the *three* clauses into which this divinely-ordained blessing is divided represent the blessing of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost? It almost seems as if Scripture exercises a certain reverent reticence in regard to the thought of the Trinity. It often reveals the sublime truth without mentioning it. Thus we are told that, *in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth*. But, in the prologue of John's Gospel, it is declared that by *the Son* all things were made. And again we are assured that it was when *the Spirit* of God moved upon the face of the waters that the mighty pageant began to unroll!

The same holds true of Redemption. Of the Saviour it is written that He, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. The Son! The Spirit ! The Father!

The Bible itself is spoken of as the Word of God. Again, we are bidden to let the Word of *Christ* dwell richly within us. And, yet again, we are informed that the book only came into existence because holy men of old spoke as they were borne along by the *Holy Spirit*.

Holy; Holy; Holy! cried the seraphs in Isaiah's glowing vision. What can it mean but Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit? How else are we to interpret **the** pronouns in the subsequent question: Whom shall *I* send and who will go for us?

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. ! Is there not something essentially fatherly about the thought of blessing and keeping? The two seem wedded to each other. 'God bless you and keep you, dear Mother Machree!' It is the Father who blesses: it is the Father who keeps.

The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee! Our minds turn naturally to Jesus, the Saviour, when we think of the Shining Face and the Abounding Grace. There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth. And where is that joy that the angels witness but in the face of the Highest? The Shining Face and the streams of grace are the triumphs of the Cross.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace! I can never recite this clause of the benediction without recalling a simple little happening of long, long ago. Engrossed in a book, I was reclining in a deckchair on the lawn. A toddler was playing on the grass beside me. I had been vaguely conscious of her attempts to attract my attention; but had, I am ashamed to say, ignored them. Presently, however, she came closer and made a direct and pointed approach.

‘Lift up your face, Daddy,’ she said, ‘Sezza wants to see you!’

The uplifted countenance! The child wants to see the Father’s face. And is it not the prerogative of the divine Spirit to vouchsafe to me that revelation? And is it not the prerogative of the divine Spirit to *instil* into my troubled soul the priceless boon of peace?

He came in semblance of a dove,
With sheltering wings outspread,
The holy balm of peace and love
On earth to shed.

And so I seem to see the distinctive thought of the Father in the blessing and the keeping. I seem to see the distinctive thought of the Saviour in the Shining Face and the Abounding Grace. And I seem to see the distinctive thought of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding of the Father’s countenance and in the ministration of heaven’s perfect peace.

III

On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them: The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace!

Can anybody imagine that the Lord God of Israel would have instructed Aaron so to bless the people unless He Himself intended to bestow upon them all the boons and benisons of which He spoke? In the verse that follows the stately words, God as good as says that, if Aaron promises, He Himself will perform.

Would a father encourage his little girl to ask Santa Claus for a doll unless he had it firmly in mind to include a doll among her Christmas presents? So that, unlike many of our pious aspirations and ejaculations, this is no mere gust of wishful thinking. It is a pledge and a **covenant**. God bids His ministers breathe this lovely benediction upon His people because He has Himself resolved to bless them and to keep them; to show them His Shining Face and His overflowing grace; to reveal Himself to them in beauty and in majesty; and to pour into their fevered hearts the peace that passeth all understanding.

Chapter

The Sleuths

WHAT quests the world has witnessed! In my boyhood days we were thrilled every now and again by the daring attempt of some gallant explorer to reach one or other of the Poles. The adventure was invariably whelmed in failure, if not in disaster; and few of us really believed that the Poles would ever be discovered.

Think of the forty expeditions that **set** out, **one** after another, to ascertain what had become of Sir John Franklin and his companions, who, in their endeavour to open up **a** passage through the ice from the Atlantic into the Pacific, had vanished into the eternal silences!

Think, too, of the efforts of ancient and modern peoples to find the head-waters of the Nile! Is there anything more affecting, in **the annals** of geographical research, than the story of the anguish of Livingstone on realizing that, with his strength spent and the

sands of existence running out, the object of his passionate quest still eluded him? 'The fountains!' he murmured, in his last delirium, as he threw himself down to die in old Chitambo's village at Ilala in East Africa, 'The fountains of Herodotus! The sources of the Nile!' But it was not within his power to find them,

And think of the long and tireless searches for lost ships! Before the introduction of wireless, a great *liner* would lose her propeller or break her shaft; and scores of other vessels would comb the vast oceanic spaces for weeks and months looking for the drifting and helpless steamer. And in many cases, as in the case of the *Waratah*, the search was all in vain.

But, of all such searches, the strangest and most intriguing is the search of which the prophet Jeremiah tells. *In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them.*

The search for sin! My transgressions shall be sought for! It is not clear whether the expedition is an expedition of angels or an expedition of devils; but it is an expedition that will leave no stone unturned in its efforts to trace those iniquities of mine. It will ransack the loftiest mountains and scour the loneliest valleys; it will comb the sands of the endless deserts, thrid the labyrinths of the darkest mines, pierce the tangle of the densest jungles, penetrate the silence of the eternal *snows*. It will search the dizziest heights above and the dreariest depths beneath; it will climb the steep ascent of heaven and rattle at the gates of hell. The immensities, the infinities and the eternities will all be sifted and scanned.

The thought fills me with some such terror as Tom Hood describes in his *Dream of Eugene Aram*. The guilty schoolmaster tried to conceal his horrid crime beneath the waters of the rivulet; but, when he returned to the spot, 'he saw the dead in the river bed, for the faithless stream was dry'. Frantically he hastened to hide it among the debris of the forest; but, when he came once more to the spot, 'a mighty wind had swept the leaves and still the *corse was bare*'. It could not and would **not be hid**.

I tremble lest my experience should be a duplicate of his. Where

are my sins—the sins for which that celestial or infernal expedition will so tirelessly and exhaustively search? Are they secreted where no hound of heaven or sleuth of hell can find them, though, by night and by day, he search never so diligently?

Where are my sins? In my anxiety I determined to inquire. I opened my Bible. I found that the Old Testament is dominated by the Prophets—the Minor Prophets and the Major Prophets. I decided to ask one of each. I found that the New Testament is dominated by the Apostles, among whom Peter and Paul stand out conspicuously. I would address my earnest question to each of them.

I

As a representative of the Minor Prophets, I consulted Micah. Micah has a good *deal* to say about sin, and I somehow felt that he **would sympathize**. ‘Where are *my* sins?’ I asked him. And he **replied without a moment’s hesitation**. ‘**They are in the depths of the sea!**’ he **averred**. *He has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*

The depths of the sea! The scientists tell me that there are profundities of ocean that have never been plumbed. Those depths are so dark that the water is as black as ink; they are so cold that the poles are warm *in* comparison: the pressure *is* so great that nothing will sink to them. If a battleship could be forced into that watery abyss, it would be crushed to pieces like a child’s toy. Nothing can exist there. The depths of the sea! *He has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea!*

Sheila O’Gahagan was a factory girl in Ireland. Her health was very frail and she was advised *to* try the effect of *a* holiday by the side of the sea. But, in her heart of hearts, she was perplexed by a matter that struck much deeper than the matter of her health. She was troubled by that very ancient problem, that very modern problem, that universal problem, that individual problem—the problem of human sin. One day, as she sat, with her Bible on her knee, looking out on the wilderness of waves *as they* broke upon the basalt cliffs of the Giants’ Causeway, she came upon this passage in Micah. ‘The depths of the sea!’ she said to herself as she

surveyed the blue horizon, 'the depths of the sea! My sins are all cast in the depths of the sea.' And when, a few months later, she passed peacefully away, some verses were found in her desk. Until then none of her friends had the slightest suspicion that she possessed any gift for poesy. But Micah's great proclamation had set her soul singing:

*I will cast in the depths of the fathomless sea
All thy sins and transgressions, whatever they be;
Though they mount up to heaven, though they sink down to hell,
They shall sink in the depths, and above them shall swell
All the waves of My mercy, so mighty and free:
I will cast all thy sins in the depths of the sea.*

There are several verses, but they are all to the same effect. Our sins, once forgiven, are hidden where they can never be found. They are in the fathomless depths of the sea!

II

As a representative of the Major Prophets, I sought the counsel of the most evangelistic of them all. I vaguely felt that Isaiah would probably have something to say that would comfort me. Nor was I mistaken. 'Where are my sins?' I asked him. 'Are they where they can never be found?' And Isaiah replied, as Micah had done, without a second's delay. They are behind God's back, he declared. *Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back*

Behind God's back! And where is that? I seem familiar with the realm before God's face. The angels are there. And, looking into that divine countenance they behold the celestial gladness excited by a prodigal's return. *There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth.* But behind God's back! What does that mean?

What does it mean if a man suddenly turns his back upon me and angrily walks away? It means, of course, that he wishes to have nothing further to do with me. And that is precisely what Almighty God means when He turns His back on my transgressions, He means that He never wants to see them or hear of them

again: He will have nothing further to do with them. He cuts them dead. He snubs them out of existence.

'Get thee behind me, Satan!' He says. 'Get thee behind me, Sin!' It is the proper place for Satan and for Sin--behind God's back. It is the chaotic and abysmal limbo reserved for all the flotsam and the jetsam, all the rubbish and the refuse, all the *scum* and the scourings of the spiritual universe--the bottomless vacuum to which He relegates all the things that He does not wish to see, indeed, that He does wish *not* to see again for ever and for evermore. And there, behind His back, are all my sins! No place, Isaiah tells me, could be more secure.

III

Crossing the frontier from the Old Testament to the New, I sought *to* avail myself of the consecrated wisdom of the Apostles, Peter first of all. 'Where are my sins?' I asked him. Peter looked at me in surprise. 'Your sins!' he exclaimed. 'Why, they have been borne away-borne into the oblivion of everlasting forgetfulness-borne away by the Lamb of God, *who, in His own person, bore our sins in His own body up to the Tree!*

With one voice, the authorities agree that Peter's phrase is an allusion to the impressive symbolism of the dismissal and dereliction of the Scapegoat, *It* happened on the Great Day of Atonement. The High Priest took two goats. Having sacrificed one of them upon the altar, he laid both his hands upon the other, confessing over it the transgressions of the people. He put their sins upon the *head* of the goat, as the Levitical phrase expressively puts it. And then he committed the goat into the custody of a trustworthy person, to be driven away into the wild desolate country at the back of the wilderness, where it would never, never, never be seen or heard of again.

'He shall put their sins upon the head of the goat,' says the *Levitical* record. *'The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all,'* echoes the fifty-third of Isaiah. My sins, Peter assures me, have been borne away-carried *to* some weird never-never country, some mysterious

no-man's-land-a land not inhabited-a land where neither angels nor devils, neither God nor man, will find the slightest trace of them any more.

IV

From Peter I turn to Paul. 'Where are my *sins*?' I asked him. One of these days, I explained, they will be searched for: are they where neither heaven nor hell can find them?

'Your sins!' Paul exclaimed. 'Why, they are nailed to the Cross! The Son of God took the whole list of them-the *handwriting that was against you-and* nailed it *to His* Cross, glorying, as He did so, in its utter extinction and complete annihilation!'

It was His superb revenge. My sins nailed Him to the Cross, and then, by way of divine retaliation, He took the hammer in His divine hand and nailed them to it!

Nailed to His Cross! There are, they say, in the churches and convents, the monasteries and the museums of the world, enough fragments of the Holy Cross to build a forest of crosses. Sort them out; sift the true (if any) from the false; fit the genuine pieces together like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle; and when you have completed the restoration of the original Cross, then, but not till then, you will find my sins!

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!

My sin; not in part, but the whole,

Is nailed to His cross; and I bear it no more;

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; oh, my soul!

V

When I was a small boy I often spent an hour on Sunday evening in poring over the pages of a magnificent copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The immense volume was profusely and attractively illustrated. The pictures divided themselves in my mind into two groups. There were the pictures that represented Christian in rags and tatters, groaning beneath the heavy burden of his sins, and there *were* the pictures that represented him striding

along the pilgrim path in his brodered suit and with the dreadful burden gone. How, I used to wonder, did he lose chat crushing load?

Amidst the jeers of his old companions, he left the City of Destruction; but *that* did not relieve his back of the Lurden. You do not get rid of your sins by breaking with your former habits and associates.

Meeting Mr. Evangelist, he had long talks with him as to the way of salvation; but *that* did not loose the load from his shoulders. You do not get rid of your sins by getting into touch with the Church.

He spent some time in Mr. Interpreter's house, probing the deeper mysteries of the kingdom of God. But *that* did not free him from his burden. You do not get rid of your sins by an exhaustive study of prophecy or theology or philosophy.

But at length he came to the Cross. 'And I saw in my dream that, just as Christian came up with the Cross, his Lurden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till *it* came to the mouth of *the* sepulchre, where it fell in and I saw it no more!'

'I saw it no more,' says Bunyan. Nor has anybody else. For when a man loses his sins, as Christian lost his, they are cast into the depths of the sea; they are hurled behind God's back; they are borne away by the heavenly Scapegoat to a land not inhabited; they are nailed to the Cross; they are dead and done with to all eternity. And though the hounds of heaven and the sleuths of hell, with eyes behind and before, search without ceasing, and search through *all* the ages, their search must be futile. Those sins will never be found, for God Himself has forgiven and forgotten them: He has expunged them from His very memory: my sins and iniquities will He remember no more.

chapter *III**Sunday Afternoon*

I NEVER attended Sunday School. This seems, in retrospect, a trifle extraordinary, especially when I remember that my father was the Secretary of the church, and that, in the nature of things, he was in constant association with the superintendent and officers of the Sunday School. Moreover, my uncle and a maiden aunt—the only relatives in the immediate vicinity—were both teachers in the Sunday School and in close touch with us boys.

The mention of my aunt reminds me that my opening sentence must be slightly modified. For, when I was a tiny toddler, my aunt often came home with us after church and stayed to dinner. She then craved permission to take me with her to Sunday School; and, just occasionally, her request was granted. Her class was a class of senior girls and I vividly remember being severely mauled by these charming young ladies as they attempted to decide the all-important question as to between which of them I was to sit. They moved me hither and thither like a pawn on a chess-board. Perhaps, just at first, I rather enjoyed all this coddling and cosseting. It was pleasant to be made such a fuss of. But, as I became less and less of a baby and more and more of a boy, its appeal diminished and I aided and abetted my parents in rejecting my aunt's well-meant overtures.

The question then arose, of course, as to whether or not I should go in the ordinary way, taking my place with other small boys of my own age in one of the junior classes. But my mother was strongly averse to it, and my father, although not feeling so decidedly, yielded to her wish; and thus it came about that neither I, nor any of my brothers and sisters, ever went to Sunday School.

My mother was a woman of strong opinions and prejudices. She knew her own mind and seldom gave a reason for any judgements that she formed. If any of us asked her why we were not allowed to go with other girls and boys to Sunday School, she simply told

us that she liked us all to go to church with father and herself on Sunday morning; that she liked us to spend Sunday evening with herself; and that she thought that this was quite enough.

'I want you to remember', she would say, 'all that you hear in church on Sunday mornings; and I want you to attend to all that I say to you and read Sunday nights; and I really think that this is as much as you can manage.'

I have told elsewhere of those never-to-be-forgotten Sunday evenings. That was the golden hour of the whole week. On Sunday evening father went to church alone, or taking with him just one of us for company. I do not know to this day whether we were most pleased to go or stay. What walks and talks those were in the evening cool of summer, by the starlight of autumn, or as we trudged through the winter snow! A boy tells his father under such conditions things that he would never dream of mentioning at any other time. What questions; what confidences; what revelations! There, surely, stands the true confessional! And we loved to gaze upon the old church at night. It seemed strange to see the stained-glass windows showing their glories to the passers-by instead of to the worshippers within.

Yet, pleasant as all this was, it was costly. For it meant forsaking the circle round the fire. There mother gathered her boys about her; read with us the collect and the lesson that were being used in church; and then held us spellbound with a chapter or two of some delightful book. It is wonderful how many books we got through on those Sunday evenings. Then, before we said good night, we turned out the gas and just sat and talked by the light of the dying embers. Most of us were sprawling on the hearth-rug, sitting on hassocks, or kneeling round the fender. It always ended with a story. And, of all the stories that I have since heard and read, none ever moved me like those stories that, in the flickering firelight, mother told.

This, she used to say, following upon our attendance at church in the morning, was quite enough; she did not wish us to go to Sunday School. We had such implicit confidence in her judgement that we never questioned her decision; never rebelled against

it; never asked to be allowed to accompany the other boys. We took it for granted that she had excellent grounds for her conclusion, although it did not occur to me until many years afterwards to speculate as to what her reasons were.

I fancy that I have already hinted at her real reason, or, at least her main one. Father probably told her, when they were by themselves, of the way in which we opened our hearts to him in walking to and from the church on Sunday evening. But this opportunity only came to each of us once in every few weeks. I fancy that she thought that we needed more of that kind of thing. She distrusted her own feminine authority over our boyish minds. She felt that we needed more of the masculine touch, She had, as we all had, a tremendous admiration for my father. She was anxious that we should feel, as fully as circumstances would permit, the impact of his fine character upon our own. And, looking back upon it now, I feel certain that we were kept away from Sunday School in order that we might spend Sunday afternoon with father.

During the week we saw very little of him. He went off every morning to his office, and, when he returned in the evening, he brought with him a pile of papers to be dealt with before bedtime. On summer evenings he was busy in his garden, whilst we ourselves rushed out as soon as home-lessons were done and only returned from cricket in time to say good night and go to bed. In the winter evenings, the bagatelle-board was opened. Father sat at a little table in the corner of the room, working away at his everlasting papers; but he liked to have a part in every game. When it was his turn to handle the cue, he dropped his pen, rose, played his hand, inquired as to the state of the contest, rallied his partners if they were losing, derided his opponents if things were going well for his side, and then, with a laugh, returned to his desk. This was all that we saw of him except on Sundays.

He was, however, a strict Sabbatarian. Between Saturday and Monday he never even glanced at his books and papers; and, except for strolling up and down it, pipe in mouth, he never on that day touched his beloved garden.

But on Sunday afternoons he went for long, long walks. He

passionately loved the town in which we lived. He really thought that, in the entire solar system, there was no place to compare with Tunbridge Wells. Indeed, this enthusiasm of his accounted in large measure for that mass of correspondence that absorbed his evenings. He inaugurated a society for the promotion of the interests of the town and was for many years its Secretary. He went to no end of trouble to see that appealing photographs of our local beauty spots were displayed in hotel lounges and railway compartments throughout the country; and he organized first-class cricket matches, and similar attractions, in order to bring crowds of people to the town to behold its fascinations for themselves. I distinctly recall a certain day on which he told me that he had an appointment with Dr. W. G. Grace concerning a match that he was hoping to arrange. Would I care to accompany him? I went; shook hands with the bearded giant; and, in my association with other boys, could talk of nothing else for weeks afterwards. They must have wished that W. G. Grace had never been born-or that I had not been!

Arising from his fondness for Tunbridge Wells was his keenness in exploring it. The town, which, with its extensive common and its picturesque parks, is beautiful in itself, was-and, in a minor degree, still is--entirely surrounded by undulating hills and graceful valleys, spreading fields and shady woods, old-fashioned farms and romantic little villages. Set out in whatever direction you like, and you have to travel far before finding your eyes feasting on a banquet of sylvan loveliness.

I know; for father revealed it all to me. On Sunday, as soon as we returned from church, we had dinner-the one dinner of the week at which we were all present and over which we could take our time. Then, whilst we each of us followed our own fancy, father stretched himself out in his capacious armchair and quickly fell into a deep and sonorous sleep. But not for long. After half an hour or so he would open his eyes, glance around, walk across to the window and ask: 'Who's for a walk?'

Who wasn't? Sometimes mother said that she would come. But in the days of which I am specially thinking she so often had

a baby in her arms-or on the way-that her presence was only possible during comparatively brief periods. But she loved those Sunday afternoon rambles as much as any of us; and we enjoyed them all the more when she was able to come.

In the afternoon we did not march, two by two, as in the morning. The morning outing was, literally, a church parade. But, in the afternoon, it was a case of go-as-you-please. Father-tall, erect, soldierly, never hurrying and never dawdling-strode on in front. Sometimes one or two of us would walk beside him, chatting merrily or asking questions. Sometimes, if something in field or hedgerow attracted our attention, we would all drop behind, and then, when the momentary diversion had lost its charm, we would set out at top speed in pursuit of our leader.

We did not like to be too long separated from him. He seemed to know everything about everything, and what he did not know he wrested from the big *encyclopaedia* as soon as we reached home. He knew, at any rate, where every bird's nest was to be found. He knew how to start a rabbit from the burrow by the roadside; how to find the weasel under the oak-tree; how to unearth the stoat on the bank.

Moreover, he not only knew things; he knew people. We would drop in at quaint old farm-houses and be shown all that there was to see and be told all that there was to tell. As a special treat we were taken down to the byres at milking-time and regaled each with a mug of warm milk, straight from the cow. Or, in the hopping-time, we were taken to the bins and into the oast-houses.

I have no idea as to the number of different walks he took us. We seldom seemed to be pursuing a familiar path. There was the walk across the Common to *Rusthall*, past the Toad Rock and on through the woods to the old church at Speldhurst, returning by way of *Langton*; there was the walk to Eridge, across the park and past the Castle, always made fascinating by the herds of fallow deer grazing in the hollow; there was the walk along Forest Road, past the beautiful New Cemetery into Frant village, culminating in a rest beside Frant Church at a spot from which we looked out

on a bewilderingly extensive panorama of tilth and pasture, woodland and stream; there was the walk to High Brooms, and up though Powder Mill Lane to Southborough and home by a kind of bridle-path that, twisting this way and that way, brought us at last to the back of the town. And there were scores of others.

Nothing but a steady rain stood between us and these Sunday afternoon rambles. I remember hot days on which we carried our jackets on our arms, and wintry afternoons on which we trudged through the snow. **But**, whatever the route and whatever the weather, we always enjoyed it, arriving home to tea dreadfully tired, but boisterously happy.

And, whatever the attractions and excitements of the stroll, the star attraction was **always**—father! He was a packet of surprises. He always had something fresh to tell us, something new to show us, and was always up to tricks. A favourite jest of his, if we dropped too far behind, was to hide somewhere in the woods, leaving us in a quandary as to whether to waste time in searching or to run for our lives in order to overtake him.

These Sunday afternoon walks created a kind of atmosphere. We always regarded him in the light of the spirit that they generated. When we saw him open the vestry door for the minister, and then walk solemnly to his place at the end of our pew, whilst the preacher climbed the steps of the beautiful white pulpit, his ceremonial gravity was softened in our eyes by the thought of those afternoon excursions. And when, once every day, he led us in family worship, his deep, impressive tones and reverential bearing were robbed, for us, of anything terrifying or forbidding by the association of his personality with the felicity of our Sunday jaunts.

And so it came about that I never attended Sunday School. It was, I have no doubt, a serious deprivation. And yet the compensations were so rich that I have never been able to lament my loss. The memory of those Sunday afternoons with father is so sweet and so sacred that I have never had it in my heart to censure my mother's inflexible decision.

*Chapter IV**When I Survey*

I WANT you, if you kindly will, to peep over this gentleman's shoulder and take a swift glance into the room that he is just about to enter. You say that, before doing so, you would like to know something of the gentleman himself. I assure you that **your** objection is quite beside the point.

As a matter of fact, the well-groomed gentleman tapping softly at the door is the Right Hon. Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons. Having heard that Dr. Isaac Watts is nearing his end, he feels somewhat ashamed of the circumstance that he has never made it his business to meet so good and so eminent a man. He has, therefore, made up his mind, before it is too late, to repair the omission.

And here he is! But see, the door is opening! And there, not in bed, but hunched up in his big study-chair, is a tiny, bony, pinch-faced wisp of humanity, almost hidden in the ample folds of a gaily-flowered dressing-gown, and looking for all the world like a little wizened Chinese mandarin! As his visitor enters, the shrivelled and dwarfish creature looks up and smiles, not unpleasantly, and, although his voice is a trifle squeaky, the general impression is a distinctly agreeable one. This, if you please, is the greatest hymn-writer of all time, the man whose songs are destined to be sung, always with enjoyment and often with ecstasy, by all the Churches as long as the language endures!

I

To his life-long chagrin, he was pitifully small. He loathed the sight of his diminutive figure whenever he glimpsed it in a mirror. Nothing stung him more than to hear somebody refer to him as *little* Dr. Watts. He simply squirmed. It was in self-defence **that** he sang:

Were I so tall to reach the pole,
 Or grasp the ocean with my span,
 I must be measured by my soul,
 The mind's the standard of the man.

The torture of his physical insignificance frayed his nerves. It wove itself into his dreams, And, in times of serious illness, his delirium turned the horror topsy-turvy. He raved of his colossal proportions! He was too big to pass through any doorway! He could not squeeze himself into his pulpit! The chairs crumpled like matchwood under his weight! No cab or carriage would hold him! His fevered brain had converted the pygmy into a giant!

And, in some respects, a giant he was! 'He stands absolutely alone,' says Thomas Wright. 'He has no peer. He is the greatest of the great.' Mr. Wright adds that if nothing from his pen has attained to the popularity of Toplady's *Rock of Ages*, or is quite so affecting as Cowper's *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*; if he lacks the mellifluousness of Charles Wesley or the equipoise of John Newton: the fact remains that he has written a larger number of hymns of the first rank than any other hymnist.

He was literally a born poet. Even as a small boy there were times when he could not express himself other than in verse. His father—a stern and puritanical soul who had endured several terms of imprisonment for conscience' sake—looked askance on this propensity in his boy. But Isaac could not repress it. On one occasion the household was engaged in family worship. Isaac, sad to say, was on his knees with eyes wide open. Whilst the priest-like father lifted up his voice in fervent supplication, a mouse scampered across the room and ran up the bell-rope. Isaac burst into laughter. Prayers over, the horrified father indignantly demanded an explanation. Isaac told in his own way what had happened:

There was a mouse for want of stairs
 Ran up the rope to say his prayers.

This was piling crime on crime. The father seized his rod and ordered Isaac to follow him out of the room. The boy, however, threw himself on his knees. 'O father,' he cried,

'O father, father, pity take
And I will no more verses make!'

His mother, more sympathetic, once offered a farthing to the boy who should write the best verses. Isaac entered for the prize, but attached to his manuscript the couplet:

I write not for a farthing; but to try
How I your farthing writers can outvie.

As he made his way through his teens, he became extremely serious. The salvation of his own soul became to him the thing above all others to be desired and sought. Among *his* papers there is a memorandum in which he tells us that he fell under considerable conviction of sin in his fifteenth year. Twelve months later he says: 'I was taught to trust in Christ, I hope.' The two words, 'I hope', introduce a palpable note of uncertainty. But there is no uncertainty about a later record. 'An heir of glory has been born!' he joyously declares. And this transfiguring experience turned his gift for poesy into a new channel.

II

At the age of twenty-one, he accompanied his father one day to a Nonconformist chapel at Southampton. In discussing the service on the way home, Isaac remarked that he had carefully examined the hymn-book and had found it very disappointing. There was not, he sweepingly declared, a decent hymn in the collection. Without an exception, they were all lacking in dignity and beauty.

'Then, my boy,' replied the philosophical father, who had come to realize, by this time, that his son's poetic impulses were incapable of restraint, 'the best thing that you can do is to write some better ones!'

On reaching home, Isaac sat down and called on his best powers to respond to his rather's challenge. He wrote:

Behold the glories of the Lamb,
Amidst his Father's throne;
Prepare new honours for His name
And songs before unknown!

And thus commenced, on that very day, the fruitful career of 'the father of our English hymnody'.

Many of the hymns that immediately followed were composed in the saddle in the course of long country rides, and those who are familiar with the swing and the cadence of his verses will find it easy to match the metre with the rhythm of the horse's feet.

In his monumental trilogy-Clayhanger, *Hilda Lessways* and *These Twain*-Arnold Bennett twice describes the public holiday on which the centenary of the Sunday School movement was celebrated in the Five Towns. Moved by curiosity, his hero and heroine, Edwin and Hilda, join the throng in the streets. They follow the proceedings-the procession, the speeches, the singing, and all the rest of it-with languid and almost cynical interest, until suddenly the assembled multitude joins in a hymn that changes the entire atmosphere:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Hilda, to whom religion had made no profound appeal, was overwhelmed: she could not tell why. To conceal her emotion, she turned her face.

'What's the matter?' asked Edwin.

Hilda was disgusted at his tactlessness in embarrassing her; but, for the sake of saying something, and easing the tension, she asked him who wrote the hymn. In spite of his pretensions to bookishness, Edwin did not know; and she despised him for his ignorance.

'Dr. Watts wrote it,' she flashed, 'and it would be worth anything on earth to be able to sing those words--and mean *them!*'

A novelist of a very different type, Mrs. L. T. Meade, has devoted one of her books, *Hepsy, Gipsy*, to showing how the same hymn met the aching need and irradiated the young life of her principal character.

Hepsy, Gipsy, is a story of two cavities. The *first* cavity is the hole in the druid oak from which Giant Lee's gold has been stolen.

The *second* cavity is the empty heart of Hepsy, the gipsy girl, when she found her childish faith in ruins. The last chapter in the book is entitled _____ and tells how both vacuums ceased to exist.

Hepsy chanced to discover that Giant Lee was going once more to the oak in the depths of the wood to grope for his lost treasure. Hepsy herself was mothering the baby boy that, **in dying**, Nancy Lee had presented to her husband. The Giant would have nothing to do with his child, and, but for Hepsy, it must have perished. Hepsy made up her mind that Lee should care for his boy, and she compassed her end by guile. ~~She~~ reached the druid oak before him and hid the baby where he had once hidden the gold. When he reached the spot, he climbed the tree, and, in doing so, thought he heard a strange sound in the heart of the oak. When he peered into the cavity, he was startled. For a very fair face, a face that was surrounded by an aureole of gold, a sweet, soft baby face that seemed the very image of poor Nancy's, peeped out of the ivy and looked straight at him. And, in the end, Giant Lee took his neglected baby to his heart; and his boy was a greater comfort to him than all his gold could have been.

And Hepsy? How was that empty heart of hers filled and satisfied? She one day heard a sweet voice singing:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

'What's "*love so amazing*"?' Hepsy asked the singer.

And then, for the first time, Hepsy heard the story of the Wondrous Cross. Poor Hepsy's empty heart drank it all in. She was thirsty for it. It was just what she wanted. It filled the aching void, The Cross was the substance of which her girlish dreams were the shadow.

Later on, Hepsy rescued the baby from a blazing tent; and, in doing so, was herself terribly burned.

'But what's the pain?' she murmured. 'What's the pain? It's nothing when the heart's full-full of love so amazing, so divine! My heart is like a cup when you take it to the well and fill it to the brim!'

III

And, turning from fiction to fact, was not George Eliot fond of telling how her aunt, Mrs. Samuel Evans—'the fiery little Methodist heroine of *Adam Bede*'—recited the hymn with rapturous fervour during her last sickness?

Nor can we forget Matthew Arnold. On a beautiful Sunday morning in the spring of 1888, Arnold, when visiting Liverpool in order to meet his daughter on her return from America, went to hear Dr. John Watson—better known as Ian Maclaren—at Sefton Park. Dr. Watson preached on 'The Shadow of the Cross', using an illustration borrowed from the reports of the Riviera earthquake. In one village, he said, everything was overthrown but the huge wayside crucifix, and to it the people, feeling the very ground shuddering beneath their feet, rushed for shelter and protection. The service closed with Dr. Watts' *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Matthew Arnold walked quietly back to the home of his brother-in-law, with whom he was staying; and, as he came down to lunch half an hour later, a servant heard him crooning the verses softly to himself. 'Ah, yes,' he remarked to Mr. and Mrs. Cropper at table, after repeating Dr. Watson's earthquake story and telling of the deep impression left upon his mind by the service; 'Ah, yes; the Cross still stands, and, in the straits of the soul, makes its ancient appeal!' Glancing at his watch, he excused himself: hurried to catch a tram; collapsed of heart failure on the street; and was gone!

I am not surprised that the hymn appealed to a mind as coldly critical as Matthew Arnold's, for, like so many of the hymns of Isaac Watts, it is marked, not only by intense devotion, but by profound philosophy. Take the last verse for example:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 That were an offering far too **small**:
 Love so amazing, so divine,
 Demands my soul, my life, my **all**.

It means, if it means anything, that a million universes are of smaller worth than a single human soul. The whole realm of nature is too paltry an offering: love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul! Arnold would appreciate a point like that.

Isaac Watts was a choice spirit, His people at Mark Lane—afterwards Bury Street—were devotedly attached to him, and although, during his later years, his health would only permit of fitful visits to his pulpit, they would not hear of any severance of the tie. Perhaps the finest testimony to the sweetness and charm of his disposition is found in the fact that, in 1714, he went to spend a week with Sir Thomas and Lady Abney; the visit extended until he died in 1748; and Lady Abney said that he became more honoured and beloved of the household with every day that passed. I often think that his inner self is best reflected in that verse of his best-known hymn--When I Survey—which is usually omitted from our collections:

His dying crimson, like a robe,
 Spreads o'er His body on the tree.
 Then am I dead to all the globe
 And all the globe is dead to me.

Blaming his *petite* stature for his rejection at the hands of the beautiful Elizabeth Singer—a highly-gifted young lady of comely form, rich auburn hair, and dark blue eyes that sparkled with animation—he remained a bachelor to the end of the chapter. He continued in secret to write amatory verses concerning his lost love who, some time later, married a minister thirteen years younger than herself. Dr. Watts retained her friendship to the last, and, when she died at the age of sixty-three, there was found in her desk a packet of manuscript with a letter addressed to him, assuring him of her sincere admiration and begging him to revise her work and, if he deemed it wise, publish it.

The good old man died in Lady Abney's beautiful home at the

age of seventy-four. He was visited in his last illness by men like Philip Doddridge and by women like the Countess of Huntingdon. A monument marks his resting place in Bunhill Fields, where he lies in company with William Blake, John Bunyan, John Owen, Susanna Wesley, Daniel Defoe, and a multitude of other celebrities, with John Wesley himself and George Fox, the sturdy Quaker, near by.

Another monument is to be found in Westminster Abbey. In Abney Park Cemetery, which marks the site of the stately home that showed him such extended hospitality, there is a statue by E. H. Bailey, R.A., erected by public subscription, whilst in the Watts' Memorial Park at Southampton there is another statue—a particularly fine one—by Mr. R. T. Lucas. At the Civic Centre in Southampton, too, a carillon rings out the tune of his O God, Our *Help* in Ages Past, every four hours. But his most fitting and most eloquent memorial is the stained-glass window at Freeby in Leicestershire which represents him as still surveying the Cross—that Wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died.

Chapter V

The Net is Spread

AMONG the autobiographies that I handle with peculiar reverence and affection there is none that I have read more frequently and quoted more tellingly than the autobiography of Dr. Thomas Guthrie. Every page is peppered with striking, suggestive, or amusing records.

To-day it suits my purpose to turn once more to the passage at the beginning of the book in which Dr. Guthrie describes his first school. The teacher was a weaver, who plied his shuttle while he instructed his pupils. The schoolroom was the weaver's workroom, sitting-room, and bedroom. The loom occupied one corner; a bed stood in the second; another bed monopolized the third; and a table the fourth. The scholars could sit where they liked, so long as they did not block the door! The thud of the loom punctuated the drone of the lessons. Yet the good man did his *work* well. Having mastered the alphabet, each child passed at once into the Book of Proverbs.

In olden time, Dr. Guthrie tells us, this was the universal custom in the schools of Scotland, and he laments its discontinuance. The Book of Proverbs, he points out, abounds in pearl-like epigrams, couched in words of a single syllable, Nowadays, when children reach that stage, they are made to write *Tom* has a dog, or *The cat* is good, or *The cow* has a *calf*. Silly trash! snorts Dr. Guthrie, contemptuously; and he argues that the children would find it pleasant to write and easy to remember the stately and impressive maxims in which the Book of Proverbs is so amazingly rich. It is one of those musical strings of monosyllables that engrosses my attention to-day. It occurs in the very first chapter of the book: 'In vain *the net* is spread in the sight of any *bid*.'

I

The net is spread-spread wilfully and deliberately. The horrible thing does happen. Depraved men and women, not content with having lost their own souls, take a fiendish delight in compassing the eternal destruction of others. They resemble those wreckers on the Cornish coast who moved along the jagged cliffs at night, imitating with their lanterns the movements of a ship's light, in order that captains out at sea, thinking it safe to sail into waters in which another vessel was riding safely, would be snared on to the hungry reefs, exposing their valuable cargoes to the rapacity of the plunderers.

There are sceptics who, forgetting or ignoring the cruel loss that they themselves sustained when they jettisoned their faith, do everything in their power to insinuate doubt and uncertainty into the minds of those happy believers whose hearts rest serenely in the eternal certainties. There are drunkards who, instead of entreating others to be warned by their own degradation, take a hideous delight in beguiling sober men into the path that has led to all their wretchedness. There are gamblers so lost to all shame and all compassion that they seek to lure into their exciting but ruinous ways decent men who have hitherto taken pride in earning their money by honourable toil. And there are moral lepers who, having acquired a filthy mind and a lecherous imagination, are

only happy when, by means of their ghastly conversation, they are smearing the slime of their own defilement over the pure and wholesome lives around them.

Thus the net *is* sometimes spread with calculating and dastardly purpose. Men, and even women, sink to the level of spiritual wreckers; they become the decoys and destroyers of their own kind. But, much more often, the net is spread carelessly, thoughtlessly, almost innocently. Let me recall an incident that came under my own notice years ago.

On a sharp, frosty morning in the year 1886, two men occupied the little works office of the Pinkerton Potteries. The head office of the company was in the city; but in this diminutive building such books were kept as related directly to the machinery and manufactures, Lionel Renfree, the clerk, was a dark, well-dressed man of about forty. George Hadley, the manager, who was sitting beside the fire sorting out some papers of his own, was at least twenty years older—short, stout, and grey. It was pay-day. Lionel had just returned from the bank in the city and had shot an immense heap of glittering gold and shining silver on to the desk, preparatory to counting out the individual amounts indicated by the figures in the squares on the pay-sheet. At that moment he suddenly thought of something that necessitated a brief visit to the engine-room.

‘I’m sorry, George,’ he said, ‘I shall have to run across to the works for a minute; do you mind sitting at my desk till I return?’

‘Why, what on earth are you afraid of?’ retorted the manager. ‘There’ll be nobody coming in or out but young Harry, the office-boy; and, surely to goodness, you can trust him, can’t you?’

‘Absolutely,’ replied Renfree. ‘But, if you don’t mind, I’d like you to sit around all the same. I’ll explain later. Shan’t be long!’ And he was gone.

In the afternoon, when the cash had all been distributed and the two men were gathering up their papers in readiness for departure, Renfree reverted to the subject.

‘You seemed surprised’, he began, ‘that I asked you to watch the money whilst I was away. Well, I’ll tell you what I had *in* mind.

It wasn't that I don't trust Harry; I do; he's as honest as the day, But I'm always haunted by the memory of a thing that happened in the old days when you were cashier and I was the office-boy.

'My father died when I was a baby. My mother's health failed shortly afterwards, and we were in desperate straits. It was a wonderful relief when I was appointed, from quite a crowd of candidates, to be office-boy here. It eased the strain quite a lot. But my mother needed medicines and delicacies that I found it impossible to buy.

'Then, one pay-day, you left me alone in the office with all that pile of gold and silver. I thought of all that I could do if just one, or perhaps two, of those bright sovereigns were mine. For a minute or two my fingers fairly itched to take the money. The theft, I thought, would never be discovered. The deficiency would be attributed to a mistake at the bank. Nobody would suffer through the taking of it to anything like the extent to which my mother was suffering for the want of it.

'I actually took one or two steps towards the desk; and then, suddenly, regained possession of myself. But, for just that one horrible moment, I hovered on the brink of hell. To this day I never shoot out the money from the bag without a cold shudder running down my spine. If I had done it! If I had been convicted as, sooner or later, I certainly should have been! It would have killed my mother and ruined me. Not for worlds would I submit Harry, or any other boy, to such a temptation, That was why I acted as I did. Forgive me if, to you, it all sounds a bit queer!'

Renfree need not have apologized. Many a man has been led into theft and drunkenness and vice and shame by amiable and well-meaning people who, spreading nets without realizing that they were spreading them, multiplied the sorrows of a world that already had sorrows enough.

II

The net is spread! The familiar proverb admits of two distinct interpretations, each differing widely from the other.

The *first* and most common interpretation is that it is in vain to

spread the net whilst the bird *is* looking on: he will then be too wary to be snared in its meshes.

The *second* interpretation, championed by Dr. W. L. Watkinson and others, is that it is in vain to give the bird warning by spreading **ing your** net under his very eyes; he is so stupid that he will go into it just the same.

These two interpretations, diverging widely, nevertheless agree in one important respect. **They** agree in declaring that the bird that enters the net, after having watched the trapper spread it, is a very stupid bird indeed.

And men *are* stupid. Sin is a silly thing. It is its crass stupidity that intensifies the bitterness of repentance. The prodigal feels that it is such a senseless business to have trudged *long* and weary miles to share the husks of the swine when he might have lived like a prince in the father's house,

I should like to discuss these two interpretations of the proverb with a great congregation of young people-young people in their teens. Nobody under thirteen or over nineteen would be admitted. I should thus include all the senior scholars in our great schools, I should lay the two interpretations before them and ask their opinions.

'But', I should say, in summing up, 'whether you regard the proverb as meaning that, seeing the net spread, the bird would be too cunning to be caught, or as meaning that, seeing the net spread, the silly bird would nevertheless fly into it, one thing is clear: *you* are the birds, and, at this stage in your lives, you are watching the nets being spread!

'You are old enough now', I should say, 'to see the drift of things: you read the newspapers: you walk the streets with your fresh young eyes wide open: you listen to the conversations of your elders: you know what's what.

'You may not', I shall admit, 'thoroughly understand the working of all the traps that are being laid for *you*, but that matters little. The point is that you see clearly that traps are being laid for you, and you see what and where they are. From your secluded position on the green bough you are watching the spreading of nets.

Surely, surely, surely you will not be stupid enough, as soon as the coast is clear, to fly into them!

‘You young people’, I shall say in conclusion, ‘have already learned, not merely from your parents and teachers, but from your own observation of men and things, that the way of transgressors is hard and that the wages of sin is death. You know perfectly well, young as you are, something of the havoc and the heartbreak caused by drink, by gambling, by vice, and by sin in every shape and form. If, therefore, seeing what you have seen, reading what you have read, hearing what you have heard, and knowing what you so very well know, you deliberately seek entanglement in the snares being spread for you, *what fools you young people must be!*’

I may be mistaken; but I fancy that, in addressing that vast audience of senior girls and boys in this tone of voice, I shall be accorded a very attentive and very respectful hearing.

III

One other thing is clear, whichever way you interpret the proverb. And that other thing is the practical thing. Whether through their misfortune or their fault, many unhappy birds are actually caught in the nets; and it is our mission in life to set them free. The glory of the everlasting gospel is that it offers to snared birds the possibility of a glorious escape. That is why Christ died upon the Cross; that is why the Bible was written; that is why the Church exists. All the world over, and all the ages through, the Church is a singing Church; and that universal melody is like the gay outburst of the birds in an English grove to whom the torn meshes of the nets strewn around them bear witness to the perils from which, with ruffled plumage, they have lately been delivered.

‘*We are escaped!*’ cried the Jews, as they exultantly re-entered Jerusalem and gave way to transports of gratitude and delight. ‘*The snare is broken and we are escaped!*’

‘*We are escaped!*’ cried old Theodore Beza, his hair white with the snows of eighty winters, as he went up to the ancient church at

Geneva after the long agony of persecution and oppression was past. *'The snare is broken and we are escaped!'* And to *this* day that noble psalm is chanted by the people in that historic shrine on the anniversary of that memorable deliverance.

'We are escaped!' cried William Knibb in announcing to the slaves of *Jamaica* the victory of the abolitionists. *'The snare is broken and we are escaped!'*

'We are escaped!' cried the dying McCheyne. In the collapse of his frail body, a strange darkness had overtaken his mind. He asked to be left quite alone for half an hour. When his servant returned, the young minister's face was radiant and his voice triumphant. *'I am escaped!'* he exclaimed, joyously. *'The snare is broken and I am escaped!'*

Said I not truly that the harmonies of the Church resemble the melody of birds in an English grove whilst the torn and tangled snares lie all around? One only Hand could snap those snares and set the panting, fluttering, frightened creatures free. And that pierced Hand can break the toils of any imprisoned spirit, introducing it to a life of limitless activity and of rapturous song.

In one of his volumes of essays, Mr. A. C. Benson tells of a pleasant experience which, to-day, I shall weave into a parable. He was strolling, he says, through a charming English village *lying* just under the wold. He thought the thatched and white-walled cottages, with their *colourful* and fragrant gardens, extremely fascinating and restful. The people, too, seemed singularly attractive, Sitting in the shelter of a rose-covered porch, with a long row of bee-hives close at hand, was a frail little lady, looking dreadfully ill and worn. *Near* the open door of another *old-fashioned* dwelling, a motherly body was busy about her household tasks; whilst, on her way back from the quaint little shops that clustered round the ancient church, a comely young woman was crooning softly to the baby that beamed up at her from its perambulator. There were men, too, looking honest, sensible, and in every way interesting. Mr. Benson coveted a chat with these clean, wholesome village folk, and wished that he could peep into their dainty homes, but he had no excuse for intruding upon their privacy.

But, like so many of the best things and the best people, I found **Ettrick** singularly shy and unapproachable. It is of no use going to the booking-office at Waverley Station, Edinburgh, and asking for return tickets to Ettrick. The clerk will probably consult his time-table and solemnly assure you that there is no such place. Nor, from his point of view, is there. For, to this day, Ettrick has never heard the scream of a railway train.

I first revisited the homeland just before motor cars came into vogue. When in Scotland I inquired about Ettrick; but I was told that unless I was prepared to spend a night or two at out-of-the-way hostleries, and to undertake long walks on rough roads, I had better leave Ettrick to its eternal silence. When next I found myself in Scotland, many years later, I spent several delightful days in the Border country; but I discovered that I could only include Ettrick in my itinerary by cutting out half a dozen places that I specially wished to see; and so, a second time, Ettrick eluded me. On my third trip to Scotland, four years later, I actually set out for Ettrick-and lost my way! Kut, eight years later still, my great moment came.

I was spending an hour with a group of charming folk in Edinburgh who had it in their hearts to show me **some** memorable kindness.

'Is there any place in this part of Scotland that you would like to see?' the Rev. W. C. **Macdonald** of Palmerston Place innocently inquired. My heart missed a beat.

'There is, **indeed!**' I replied excitedly. 'I would give a king's ransom, if I possessed such a thing, to see Ettrick!'

'Splendid!' they cried. 'We'll go to-morrow!' And on the morrow, with the sun shining, and all the birds singing, we made our way to Ettrick!

And what a drive that **was!** We sped down through the beautiful and romantic scenery that is still haunted by the glorious ghost of Sir Walter Scott, the countryside of which he knew every stick and stone. We glanced afresh at Abbotsford, **Melrose Abbey**, and Dryburgh, and then made our way along the lovely banks of St. Mary's Loch, passing the Grey Mares' Tail Waterfall and Tibbie

Shiels's Inn, and on to the hill road that, after a long climb, drops down into Ettrick Valley. I had reached my goal at last!

VI

What these wild hills and desolate valleys meant to Sir Walter Scott, readers of Lockhart very well know. He was sheriff of this mountainous and well-watered countryside, and gloried in being king o' the cairn and the scaur, as he called it. When visitors came to enjoy his bounteous hospitality, nothing would do but they must set off for the Ettrick Valley at the earliest possible moment. Wordsworth, with Dorothy in attendance, dropped in on Scott in 1803. The two men were then in their early thirties, with the gates of fame yet waiting to be stormed. Before the poet and his sister realized **what** was happening, they found themselves with Scott at Ettrick, and to that introduction we owe some of the sweetest of Wordsworth's rural melodies.

Fourteen years later Scott tremendously amused Washington Irving by his exuberant enthusiasm for these rugged scenes. He made Irving clamber to a rocky hilltop, from which an indescribable panorama invited admiration.

'Now,' exclaimed Scott rapturously, 'I have brought you, like Bunyan's pilgrim, to the top of the Delectable Mountains, that I may show you all the goodly regions hereabouts. Yonder is Lammermuir and Smailholme; and there you have Galashiels and Torwoodlee and Gala Water, In that direction you see Teviotdale and the Braes of Yarrow, with Ettrick stream winding along like a silver thread to throw itself into the Tweed!' 'He rattled on like this', says Washington Irving, 'mentioning one name after another, many of which had received their romantic interest from his own pen. In fact, I saw the Border country spread out before me, and could trace the scenes of those poems and romances which had bewitched the whole world,' Scott always hoped that, when all his powers forsook him, he might

Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,

and, in a touching passage, Lockhart tells us how, in his final frailty, his life-long wish was realized.

Literature treasures ~~few~~ more poignant stories than the story of Wordsworth's last visit to this neighbourhood, shortly after the death of Scott. He is sixty-two, Leaning heavily upon a stick, he toils slowly and painfully up the slope, and then pauses, partly to take breath and partly to survey once more the exquisite stretch of emerald woodland and sparkling stream. But the grandeur of the silent hills, the perfume of the tossing hyacinths, the chirping of the grasshoppers at his feet, and the haunting laughter of the *silent* stream below, all fail *to* gladden him to-day. The beauteous landscape of leafy wold and laughing water is bathed in radiant sunshine; yet for him the skies are grey and earth is wrapped in gloom. His countenance *is* sad and pensive, for he is conjuring up the memory of happier days. He thinks of Dorothy, who was with him when he wrote Yarrow *Unvisited*, Yarrow *Visited* and *Yarrow Revisited*. And now Dorothy is ill, so ill that she can never really recover. And Scott, who first welcomed him to these heathery hills, and with whom he so often rambled along these woodland paths: Scott is dead! There are few things more affecting than to find the old familiar places, but to miss the old familiar faces. Wordsworth passes sadly over the crest of ~~the~~ hill, to visit the Yarrow Vale no more.

II

'And so,' I said to myself as I stood beside the Ettrick kirk, surveying the grimly sullen hills and the expanse of emerald pasture-land about me, 'so this is Ettrick!' I spent a few moments in poking about the churchyard. Here was the tomb of James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, the intimate, if somewhat uncouth, friend of Sir Walter. In his day, the musical and majestic minstrelsies of Hogg excited the admiration of the most eminent of his contemporaries. Hogg was twenty-six when Burns died. So far he had written nothing but a bunch of the sheerest trifles—*'songs* for the lasses to sing'. But amid the storm of universal grief

in which Robert Burns, cut off at thirty-seven, had descended to his grave, Hogg chanced to hear 'a half-daft man' refer to the dead minstrel as 'the sweetest poet ever born'. The thought flashed into Hogg's mind that so exalted a bard ought to have a successor. Upon whose shoulders should the mantle fall? Why not upon his? His face flushed and he caught his breath at the very thought of such a thing, but it became the ideal towards which he struggled during all the years that followed.

On the drive down from Edinburgh we had paused beside the beautiful monument to Hogg that adorns the green banks of St. Mary's Loch, and now, at Ettrick, we stood beside his tomb. A stone near by marks the resting-place of four Covenanters who, in the stern old Claverhouse days, had been shot for their faith down at Moffat Water. A modest monument marks the grave of a shepherd who perished in a terrible snow-storm in this valley whilst attempting to save his flock. It bears the inscription: *The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.* Away in the corner you may see the tomb of an Ettrick minister who dearly loved his horse, a minister's constant companion in those unmechanized days. When the poor beast died, his master sought permission to bury him in the kirkyard; but the Session shook their shaggy heads at the sacrilegious proposal. He therefore buried *his* steed just *outside* the churchyard, ordaining that his own bones should be laid just inside, with only the fence between.

III

Then, baring my head beside the resting-place of Thomas Boston, I plucked from among the grass on that honoured grave the wild flowers that, carefully preserved and pressed, lie before me **as** I write. We had already been shown, at the manse, some of the relics of the Boston age. In those days, churches were not seated; people brought their own stools; that explains why Jenny Geddes found it so easy to express her dissent from the preacher by hurling her stool at his head. Here was one of those stools, together with the Session Minute Book, the ladle-with a handle as long as a

broom-handle-with which the collection was gathered, and the queer little bell that Mr. Boston himself rang when he was ready for the people, gathered in little knots and groups about the surrounding fields, to come in to the service.

It seemed incredible, as I stood beside that lonely kirk, and surveyed the vast expanse of hill and dale around me, that here, at Ettrick, Thomas Boston exercised one of the most gracious, one of the most powerful, and one of the most fruitful ministries that even Scotland-that land of noble ministries-has ever produced. The whole country felt its fragrant influence.

Whenever I am inclined to pessimism, or am tempted to suppose that modern conditions preclude the possibility of a rich and prosperous ministry, I reflect on the conditions that beset poor Thomas Boston. On the self-same day that witnessed the union under one crown of the English and Scottish realms, on May Day, 1707, Boston settled at Ettrick. The church had but few members, and even these were of such a type that their behaviour was a reproach to the sanctuary. The broken-hearted young minister was horrified to find that many of these parishioners of his could scarcely speak without profanity, whilst others were addicted to lives of shameless immorality. Even when they came to church, the conduct of these people was disorderly and indecent to the last degree. Many of them loitered about the churchyard, arguing and brawling whilst worship was proceeding; and elders had to be told off to keep order both inside and outside of the building. It was three years before Mr. Boston would allow the Lord's Supper to be observed among them. 'I have been much discouraged with respect to my parish for a long time,' he says in his *Memoirs*, 'and have had little heart for my work.' For twenty-five years, however, he ministered incessantly to this people. He visited them all in their homes; pleaded with them each in secret; invited the heads of the household to the manse and taught them how to conduct family worship. After three years he was sufficiently assured of the sincerity of a handful of his people to admit them to the Lord's Table. Five years later he is delighted at finding that he has a hundred and fifty devout communicants.

Later still Mr. Boston witnesses the most surprising spectacle in this same valley. People come in streams from far and near to be present at the Communion Service at Ettrick. He tells us that it often reminded him of the Jewish pilgrims in Old Testament times ascending in companies to Jerusalem to keep their Passover. When the sacred season came round, he had to call in other ministers to *help* him dispense the mystic symbols. The wilderness had become a fruitful field. The Ettrick manse was every week the resort of eager penitents, who, beholding with amazement the transformation in so many lives around them, were anxious to catch the holy contagion. In every house, family worship sanctified the opening and sweetened the close of each succeeding day. And the old church under the hill was, to hundreds and hundreds of people, the dearest spot that human eyes had ever seen.

IV

Let no man suppose that Thomas Boston achieved his triumph by means of brilliant gifts. Unversed in oratory and possessed of no outstanding qualities, he was just a good, honest, plain-spoken, harding-working minister. His sheer downright goodness won the hearts of his people.

Oppressed by the isolation of his manse, and by the difficulty of getting books, he turned his loneliness to excellent account. If other books were inaccessible, he would concentrate on one. He determined to master his Bible and to master it in the original tongues. As a result, he became one of the most finished Hebraists of his day. Not content with reading Hebrew, he could speak it. And, like some missionaries of long experience who acquire the habit of *thinking* in Chinese or Bengali, Thomas Boston could think in the language *in* which the prophets thought. His Hebrew studies, so far from being a drudgery, became a perfect *revelry* with him.

Moreover, in this out-of-the-way manse, he himself wrote a book, The *Fourfold* State quickly won its way into every part of the country. 'From Abb's Head to the remotest part of Galloway',

Dr. Andrew Thomson says, 'it was to be seen *side* by side with the Bible and Bunyan on the shelf in every peasant's cottage. The shepherd bore it with him, folded in his plaid, up among the silent hills; the ploughman in the valleys refreshed his spirit with it, as with heavenly manna, after his long day of toil. The influence, which began with the humble classes, was wafted like a fragrance into the mansions of the Lowland *laird* and the Border chief, and carried with it a new and hallowed joy.' And on the authority of one who lived nearer to Boston's time, Dr. Thomson says that, for three generations, this book was the instrument of more numerous conversions and more extensive spiritual quickening than any other volume he could name. And *has* not Dr. Thomas McCrie, *one* of the greatest authorities on Scottish life and literature, spoken of *The Fourfold State* as a book that has contributed more than any other work to mould the religious sentiments of the Scottish people?

During those twenty-five years at Ettrick I doubt if Mr. Boston ever once left his pulpit, either on account of illness or to take a holiday, or to exchange with another minister. Pressed to preach elsewhere, he always answered that he could not leave 'his handful'.

He had his sorrows. For fifteen years his wife was the sunshine of his days. Then her mind collapsed, and, for the last ten years of Mr. Boston's life, she was a prisoner in her own room. When her affliction rendered her violent or noisy, Mr. Boston and the family lived in the barn and the stables until the spasm had passed. It would have been in line with the usage of the period *to* have consigned *her* to the stable at such times; but that was not Mr. Boston's way.

His evangelistic witness never wavered. Since he himself, as a boy, had been led to the Saviour by a sermon, preached by Henry Erskine, on Behold *the* Lamb *of* God, he resolved that, to the last, he would strive, by every utterance of his, to point his people to the Cross.

Yes, to the last! As his last Sunday approaches he, desperately ill, insists on preaching. 'I have never yet known a silent Sabbath,'

he says smilingly, 'and it's too late to start now!' He orders his bed to be drawn up to the window and prepares to address his people for the last time. Sunday comes. From all the farms and homesteads of that Selkirkshire countryside, ploughmen and shepherds, accompanied by their wives and children, set out early in the morning to hear their old minister's last words. From all round the slopes of Ettrick Pen, from the distant foothills of Broad Law, from the lovely shores of St. Mary's Lake, from all down the valleys of the Ettrick and the Yarrow, little groups of men and women make their way with heavy footsteps to the manse. The church itself is closed. The dying man turns his deathbed into a pulpit, and the whole countryside gathers to listen to his last message.

The eager multitude stretches far beyond the reach of his thin, wavering voice. But those who cannot hear can at least see his pale, wan face, and note the fire in his eye that even death is impotent to quench. As he sits, propped up by pillows, pleading with his people for the last time, the mountain breezes play with his thin, silvery hair. He exhausts the last atom of his failing strength as he pours out his soul in affectionate admonition and passionate entreaty, '*Behold the Lamb of God!*' he cries. His voice falters; the watchers round the bed gently remove the pillows that support him, and he lies prostrate, breathing heavily. The window is closed, and the great black crowd, breaking up into little groups again, melts sadly and silently away. In a few days it is tearfully whispered in every cottage that Thomas Boston is dead.

So I realized my dream. I actually visited Ettrick at last. And what did I see there? A stern old church: a plain, old-fashioned manse; some trees and some tombstones; some hills and some hollows. And yet I came away feeling that I had been compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses; that, external appearances notwithstanding, I had been standing in the centre of immensities, in the conflux of eternities; and that, above the bleating of the sheep and the trilling of the larks, I had heard the songs of the seraphim.

Chapter VII

The Deathless Heritage

WHEN Bunyan's Christian first set out on pilgrimage, two of his former neighbours—Pliable and Obstinate—hurried after him, hoping to induce him to abandon his hare-brained project and to return to the City of Destruction. But Christian's mind was made up. Indeed, instead of discussing the question of retracing his own steps, he endeavoured to persuade his old friends to accompany him.

'But', objected Obstinate, 'what are these things that you seek, and to find which you forsake everything?'

'I seek', replied Christian, '*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away*, reserved in heaven for those who diligently seek it! See, read of it here in my book!'

Christian's homely evangelism divided his critics. Pliable decided to join him on his splendid quest, but Obstinate turned back in disgust.

Within sight of his hundredth birthday, Thomas Sidney Cooper, the eminent though self-taught animal painter, whose works adorn some of the finest salons and academies in the world, including our own Australian galleries, felt the end approaching. 'Mr. Cooper,' said his doctor as he sat beside the old artist's deathbed, 'everyone is asking *how you* are. What shall I tell them? They are greatly concerned about you!' 'They are very kind,' replied the dying man; 'but I am less anxious that they should hear about my health than that they should know that I am exulting in the prospect of an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away*, reserved in heaven for me!' And, still glorying in the possession of such fabulous wealth, the good old man passed peacefully and triumphantly away.

The words so rapturously quoted by the pilgrim and the painter occur in Peter's first Epistle. Peter, an erstwhile fisherman, is writing to a band of scattered and persecuted refugees. To look

at him, or to look at them, you would never suspect them of owning a princely estate. But you never can tell. W. C. Burns, under whose preaching in Mr. McCheyne's pulpit at St. Peter's, Dundee, there broke out the revival that stirred all Scotland a century ago, afterwards became the flaming apostle of the Chinese people. He died preaching the redeeming love of Christ to the handful of Chinese attendants who surrounded his bed. When, afterwards, they made an inventory of his property, they found that it consisted of a Chinese Bible, an English Bible, the clothes that he was wearing when he took ill and his writing case. 'He must have been very poor!' exclaimed a little Chinese girl, sympathetically. It certainly seemed so. But it only seemed so!

When, in the office of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr. W. T. Stead heard of the Liberator crash-the financial collapse that involved thousands of hard-working and deserving people in utter ruin-he hurried into the city to learn all the facts of the tragedy. Everywhere he heard the most pitiful stories of confiding men and women who had lost every penny of their frugal savings in the disaster. But at one street corner he found a Salvation Army meeting in progress. In the centre of the ring a lassie in uniform, waving her hands ecstatically, was singing with shining face:

I'm the heir to the kingdom above,
A kingdom of light and of love;
I'm richer by far
Than the Kaiser or Czar,
I'm the heir to the kingdom above.

'She has the best of it!' said Mr. Stead to himself as, after listening for a minute or two, he went on his way to witness the misery into which the loss of money had plunged so many homes.

I

An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.
The words are obviously an echo, Peter was a member of that little group of disciples who, on a green hillside in Palestine,

listened to the immortal utterance that we know as the Sermon on the Mount. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*, Jesus said, *where moth and rust can corrupt and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal*. In one of the noblest passages of *Sesame and Lilies*, Ruskin deals with these haunting sentences about the treasures of the Court, which a moth can corrupt, the treasures of the Camp, which rust can defile, and the treasures of the Counting-house, which thieves can steal. These are the treasures of Place and Power and Pelf-moth-eaten robes, rusty swords, and rifled coffers. But suppose, says &skin, that there should arise a fourth kind of wealth—a web made fair in the weaving by Athenia's shuttle, an armour forged in divine fire by Vulcanian force, a gold mined from the sunset on Delphian cliffs-moth-proof robes, rustless swords, treasure incapable of theft!

Standing there that day, Peter listened intently to that great word about the robes of office that moths cannot corrupt, about the swords of power that rust cannot defile, and about the shining hoard that thieves cannot steal. And, long afterwards, the three sets of treasure were obviously running in his mind when he himself wrote to these scattered and persecuted Christians concerning the inheritance that is *incorruptible*, because no moth can corrupt it; *undefilable*, because no rust can defile it; and *inalienable*, because no thieves can steal it. And, to that vivid memory of the old days in which he *compained* with Jesus, we owe our *text*.

II

This sentence about the deathless inheritance is like a lovely casket containing three flashing jewels. Those three jewels are three very beautiful words—*aphtharton*, *amianton*, *amaranton*. One is inclined to pick them up and finger them fondly, as a boy who has just left school fingers his first wages, as a girl who has just become engaged fingers her ring, as a hero, just decorated for *valour*, fingers his medal.

(1) *Aphtharton*—incorruptible. We hear much nowadays of the fifth columnists—the enemy within. In actual fact most of our deadliest enemies are within. In every hair of my head, in every pore of my skin, in every drop of my blood, there swarm millions of secret agents, working day and night to compass the disintegration and decay of my entire body. Every nerve and tissue and sinew and vein is corruptible. ‘What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue!’ exclaimed Edmund Burke as, on his electioneering platform at Bristol, he received news that his opponent had suddenly died. Some of Doré’s finest painting faded and perished because the colours were mixed with faulty ingredients. The germs of corruption lurk everywhere.

But *aphtharton*! This inheritance is flawless; and, what is more, incapable of developing a flaw. The exquisite word occurs in other connections. In that noble passage to which we resort for consolation at every burial service, we are assured that *the dead shall be raised incorruptible*. Who can imagine the most microscopic particle of corruptibility in the radiant body of the risen Saviour? Who can imagine the most infinitesimal atom of corruptibility in the glorified bodies of His risen people?

The second occasion on which this fascinating word occurs is in this very chapter. *We are born again*, Peter declares, not of corruptible seed, but of *incorruptible*. Is it conceivable that that which is born of God, born of the Spirit, born of the Word which liveth and abideth for ever, can have within its divine structure any element of corruptibility? ‘You have an inheritance,’ Peter assures these harassed and hunted Christians, ‘you have an inheritance as *incorruptible* as the resurrection body, as incorruptible as the new and divine life that regeneration brings!’

(2) *Amianton*—undefilable! Not only undefiled but incapable of defilement! It was the name of a precious stone to which nothing unclean could adhere. Dust would not settle on it. Filth automatically fell from it. The breath would not cloud it. It was like those snow-white flowers that flourish in the English coal-mines: although the grime and the dust are blowing about them all the time, not a single speck settles upon their lovely petals. It reminds

us of that great saying of Jesus: Satan *cometh* but hath nothing in Mt. Like *this* deathless inheritance of ours, He was undefilable.

(3) *Amaranton*—unwithering. It was said of the amaranth that, in any atmosphere, however stifling, it would indefinitely preserve its dewy freshness. Other flowers might droop and wilt and fade, but the amaranth retained its pristine beauty.

Proud were the mighty conquerors crowned in Olympian games,

They deemed that deathless *honours* were entwined *about* their names,
But *secre* was soon the parsley wreath, the olive and the bay,

Yet the Christian's crown of amaranth shall never fade away.

So there you have these three words of consummate elegance and grace in which Peter describes the celestial inheritance to which these fugitives are the heirs. *Aphtharton: amianton: umaranton!* It is incorruptible, indestructible, and imperishable as to its substance; it is stainless, untarnishable, and undefilable as to its purity; it is fadeless, unwithering, and unshrivelling as to its beauty.

III

I said that Peter was standing on that grassy hillside listening with all his *ears* to his Lord's arresting words about the moth-proof robes and the rustless swords and the treasures that no thieves can steal. But John was there, too. And, long afterwards, whilst Peter echoed the utterance of his Lord in stately prose, John, amidst the dazzling imagery of his Apocalypse, wove it into a gorgeous poem. For John's *walls* of jasper and streets of gold and gates of pearl are, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the very things of which Jesus spoke on the Mount, the very things of which Peter wrote to his persecuted refugees.

Robes, says *Jesus*, that no moth can corrupt; swords that no rust can defile; wealth that no thieves can steal!

An inheritance, says Peter, uncorrupted and incorruptible; unsoiled and undefilable; inalienable and inviolable!

Walls, says *John*, that have in their composition no germ of crumbling decay-walls of jasper! Streets that, unlike the grandest

of earthly streets, can never be defiled by material or moral *mire*—streets *of* gold! Gates of immaculate purity and impregnable strength, gates that neither Goths nor Huns nor Vandals can storm—gates of *pearl*!

Thus, then, in each of these three cases, you have the same conception, expressed in each case in the phraseology most natural to the speaker.

And now, by way of epilogue to this rambling and discursive study, let me point out that there are only two master-forces in this world—Right and Might—and that these unlikely-looking heirs hold their inheritance in virtue of both of them.

They hold it by Right. They were born to it. Blessed, writes Peter, *blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefilable and that fadeth not away.* My boast, exclaims Cowper:

My boast is not that I derive *my* birth
From loins enthroned or rulers in the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The son of parents passed into the skies!

But Cowper knew, as Peter knew, and as we know, that the inheritance incorruptible and undefilable and inviolable cannot be inherited from pious parents. Cowper knew, as Peter knew, and as we know, that except a man be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, he cannot even see the kingdom of God.

They hold it by *Might*. Peter assures them that it is being kept for them, and they for it, by the omnipotence of the Living God! *Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God!*

This was the sublime secret that flooded the joyous soul of Mr. Stead's Salvation Army lassie:

I'm the heir to the kingdom above,
A kingdom of light and of love;
I'm richer by far
Than the Kaiser or Czar,
I'm the heir to the kingdom above.

Since then, the Kaisers have all disappeared and the Czars have all vanished, but the inheritance of which she so rapturously sang still abides--the inalienable heritage of those who, born of God, are kept by His power for its everlasting enjoyment.

Chapter VIII

The Secret of Murray McCheyne

As I approach my task this morning I find, on the left-hand side of my desk, a well-worn book that I greatly prize, and, on the right-hand side, a pair of photographs of almost equal value. The book is the *Memoir of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne*, by his intimate friend, Dr. Andrew Bonar. I bought it and read it *in* the early days of my Mosgiel ministry: I have read it many times since; and, in view of the fact that the world is just now celebrating the centenary of McCheyne, I have read it *yet* once more during the past few days. There are very few books that will bear frequent perusal; but, in this case, each re-reading has proved more stimulating and more profitable than any of its predecessors.

The greatest tribute ever paid to the book is recorded by Dr. James Stalker. Dr. Stalker says that he was once chatting with a survivor of that select group of Scottish ministers to which McCheyne belonged. They were discussing the circumstance that McCheyne died at twenty-nine. 'Ah!' exclaimed Dr. Stalker's companion, who had known both McCheyne and Bonar, 'but it was far better for McCheyne to die young, and to be embalmed in the glowing pages of Bonar's biography, than to have lived out the full span of human existence and to have missed that privilege!' So much for the book on my left: now for the photographs!

Many years ago, after preaching at Aberdeen overnight, I left in the morning for Dundee. We arrived at midday. As the train drew into the station, two or three gentlemen stepped forward to welcome us.

'You are to preach this afternoon,' they explained, 'and again this evening, with a tea and a reception in between: and then your train for the South leaves early to-morrow morning; so that, if there's anything in Dundee that you particularly wish to see, your *only* chance is to go straight away!'

'My dear sir,' I replied, 'I would far rather go without my meals whilst I'm here than miss the chance of visiting St. Peter's! I want to see Mr. McCheyne's church and his vestry and his pulpit and his tomb and anything that *still* exists that is in any way related to him!'

'Good!' my new friends replied; 'then we'll go now!' And off we went. I have paid many such pilgrimages in my time, but I have seldom been as deeply moved as by that one. Next morning, one of the gentlemen who had met us at the station, and accompanied us to St. Peter's, again rushed on to the railway platform just as our train was *leaving*.

'Seeing your interest in Mr. McCheyne and St. Peter's,' he explained, 'I tried yesterday afternoon to get you some picture postcards: but I could not satisfy myself; so I had these photographs taken. It has been a little difficult to get them finished in time; but here they are!' And he very kindly presented me with these portraits of the church and the tomb that lie at this moment on my desk.

I

I believe in the *immortality* of the soul! How can I doubt it when, in books like this, I actually hold palpitating fellowship with the man whose body was committed to the grave a hundred years ago? To read the *Life of Francis Xavier* is to be infected by his missionary passion; to read the *journal* of Mr. Wesley is to be caught in the hot flame of his evangelistic fervour: whilst to read the *Memoir of Robert Murray McCheyne* is to share the heavenly glow of his radiant and beautiful soul.

His personality is a gem of *many* glittering facets. Notwithstanding a certain physical frailty, he was an athlete: his death

was hastened by the snapping of his vaulting-pole in a **jumping** contest. He was a scholar, qualified to speak with authority on matters of geology and natural history; his Hebrew served him in good stead when conversing with learned European Jews; he appreciated the finer points of Greek translation; and, when he wished to secure the entries in his diary from curious eyes, he dropped into Latin and made his notes in that ancient tongue with perfect facility and ease.

He was a musician, too, skilled in the use of several instruments and possessing, withal, a rich and pleasing singing voice. As a poet, he poured his choicest inspirations and most poignant emotions into tuneful stanzas, some of which, like *When this passing world is done*, have found a permanent place in the hymnals of all the Churches. He was an artist, clever at sketching every interesting object or picturesque scene that enchanted his wide-open eyes. A preacher of culture, persuasiveness and passion, he was the valued companion of men like Thomas Guthrie, James Hamilton, Alexander Somerville, Robert Macdonald, Moody Stuart, and Andrew and Horatius Bonar.

And, although he himself never for a moment suspected it, he was, in the best sense of the word, a saint. One historian has said that it is the unique distinction of Robert Murray McCheyne that he has been canonized, not by any papal mandate or ecclesiastical court, but by popular acclaim. Those who were privileged to luxuriate in his perfect friendship, and those of a later generation who have breathed the fragrance of his life in the pages of his biography, have alike felt the magnetism and charm of his sheer, downright goodness. 'If ever there was a saint,' you say to yourself, 'Murray McCheyne was one!' Yet he wist not that the skin of his face did shine.

How it all began, nobody knows. McCheyne himself did not know. He could never fix any particular date as the date of his conversion or recall the exact circumstances that precipitated the spiritual crisis. When Robert was eighteen, his brother David, eight years older than himself, suddenly died. David was Robert's hero, his beau-ideal of perfect manhood. The melancholy event left

an indelible impression on the delicate mind of the susceptible youth. It took place on July 8, 1831, and, to the end of his life, Robert kept that day as sacred. Each year, in his journal, he refers to it in terms of fond recollection and renewed consecration. In 1842, for example, he remarks that 'this day, eleven years ago, I lost my holy and loving brother and began to seek the Saviour'.

Shortly after his brother's death, I find him debating with himself as to whether or not he should take the Communion. In terms as terrible as any used by Bunyan or Newton, he describes the hideous depravity of his own heart. He decides at length to approach the sacred table, not *in* spite of his sins, but because of them. It is his sins that drive him to the Saviour whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for the likes of him. 'Much peace!' he records, on the evening of that Communion feast; and, a few days later, he is wondering if it will be possible for him to go as a missionary to India or some other land.

It was shortly after this, and as a record of this, that he wrote his first hymn-Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness:

I once was a stranger to grace and to God;
I knew not my danger and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
'Jehovah Tsidkenu' was nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety, in self could I see;
'Jehovah Tsidkenu' my Saviour must be,

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free;
'Jehovah Tsidkenu' is all things to me.

II

His dream of becoming a foreign missionary haunted him to the end; though, in his heart of hearts, he knew perfectly well that the hardships of such a life, and the ravages of a tropical climate,

would overtax his slender powers of physical endurance. In this dilemma, he consulted Dr. Chalmers, who had just created a profound sensation by relinquishing his glorious public ministry in order, within the cloistral seclusion of a university, to fire the imagination of divinity students with the vision of the world's tremendous need. Chalmers advised him, whilst yet a student, to seek missionary experience among the slums of Edinburgh. He adopted the suggestion with characteristic zest; visited among the poorest of the poor; and, to his dying day, kept in touch with some of the unpromising characters with whom he was then brought into contact.

After a short but memorable period of service as assistant to Rev. John Bonar, in the parish of Larbert and Dunipace, near Stirling, he was called, at the age of twenty-three, to *St. Peter's*, Dundee, and commenced that brief but famous ministry which, in a land of noble ministries, is still regarded as a model and an inspiration.

Strangely enough, the outstanding event of Mr. McCheyne's historic ministry at Dundee was his long absence from his charge in 1839. From 1836 until 1839 he had laboured among his people at *St. Peter's* with exemplary fidelity, with intense devotion, but with no sensational success. He drew congregations of about a thousand people: he visited his parishioners with the utmost diligence and solicitude: he laid great stress on meetings for prayer and on systematic Bible study; and, however busy or however tired, he was always available to anybody seeking guidance or comfort or help. He was exceedingly happy in his work: he made everybody very fond of him: he was encouraged by a fair number of conversions: the Communion seasons at *St. Peter's* were times of wonderful grace and refreshment: and many larger and wealthier churches tried in vain to allure the young minister to other fields. But that was as far as it went.

In 1839, however, McCheyne being then twenty-six and in the third year of his ministry at Dundee, his health began to cause his friends much anxiety. Chancing to meet Dr. Candlish one day in Princes Street, Edinburgh, the doctor was shocked at the young

minister's emaciated appearance. A sudden idea flashed into his mind. The Church had recently resolved to send a Commission, consisting of a little band of carefully-selected ministers, to the Jews in Palestine and Eastern Europe. Mr. McCheyne would be the very man! He possessed all the essential qualities of heart and mind; and the voyage might re-establish his health into the bargain!

He went, and revelled in the experience. It gave him at least a taste of that foreign missionary adventure for which he had always hungered. Luxuriating in his contact with the Jewish people in many lands, he earnestly sought to learn all that they had to teach and to impart all that he could persuade them to receive. Competent authorities have declared that the printed report of the Commission is one of the best books on the Holy Land ever written, because, together with its vivid descriptions of the country illustrated by McCheyne's own sketches, it is saturated in the spirit of the sublime happenings that lend a sacred lustre to every landscape.

The Mission stimulated or inspired much of the evangelistic work that has subsequently been undertaken among the Jews. Incidentally, it was the means of the conversion of Dr. Adolph Saphir and Dr. Alfred Edersheim. And, according to Dr. Stalker, it fastened upon the Scottish mind an entirely new conception of the Hebrew people, 'For whereas', he says, 'the Jew is regarded in all other countries as a Shylock, oppressed and oppressing, hateful and hating, the Jew of the Scottish imagination is an ideal being, surrounded with affection and reverence, a child of that race to which pertain the adoption and the glory and the covenants.'

But what of St. Peter's during this long absence? St. Peter's was on fire! A revival had broken out there which moved the whole of Scotland. Mr. McCheyne had entrusted his pulpit to the Rev. W. C. Burns, afterwards the apostle to the Chinese people. Even then, as a very young man, he was consumed by a passionate longing for the salvation of his fellow men. Almost as soon as Mr. McCheyne's back was turned, the wonderful work began. On week-days and on Sundays, people of all ages and of all

classes, some from the immediate vicinity and some from the surrounding countryside, flocked to the church; and hundreds of men and women, under deep emotion, sought and found the Saviour. Every sermon was punctuated by the groans and sobs and tears of the crowded congregations,

Mr. McCheyne heard of all this with profound gratitude and yearned to be back in Dundee to share the joy of the abundant harvest. And his people longed to have him back. He arrived on a Thursday; went down to St. Peter's in the evening to meet anybody who might be there; and, to his astonishment, found that so many people had come to the church on the chance of seeing him

the building **was** crowded to its utmost capacity. Aisles **and** stairways were packed. Mr. McCheyne went to the pulpit and poured out his heart, not concerning his travels, but concerning the work of God among his people at Dundee. For more than an hour he preached Christ with all his old intensity and charm. It was a night that the people never forgot. After the meeting was over, he could scarcely force his way through the throng that pressed upon him to welcome him home and tell of their delight.

The revival continued during the three years that remained to him. The novelty wore off and the excitement subsided; but the reaping continued and a steady stream of penitents passed through Mr. McCheyne's vestry. Then, early in 1843, typhus broke out in Dundee. The young minister's entire time and strength were devoted to visiting the dying and burying the dead. The inevitable happened. He himself contracted the dread scourge, and, after a brief struggle, passed triumphantly away. When his friend, Andrew Bonar, heard the news a few hours later, he hurried across to St. Peter's. Slipping into the church, he found hundreds of people there, weeping as though eheir hearts would break; and, early in the following week, the entire city gave itself up to lamentation on the occasion of his burial, A massive monument marks the tomb, which is much visited by tourists, whilst the sweetness and chivalry of his character have woven themselves into the most cherished traditions of the North.

III

It would be pleasant, if space permitted, to say a few words concerning Mr. McCheyne's part in the Disruption. He died a few weeks before that memorable event took place. Yet, in a sense, he was one of the leaders and walked out side by side with Chalmers. He had no taste for controversy; yet, when a matter of public debate stirred his conscience, he did not hesitate to speak his mind, quietly, persuasively, and convincingly. The very fact that Mr. McCheyne was in sympathy with Chalmers drew to the cause all those who had felt the gracious influence of the revival. It secured the allegiance of thousands of the most devout, the most godly, and the most spiritually-minded folk in Scotland; and it imparted to the Disruption movement an indefinable aroma that sweetened the atmosphere and reduced to a minimum the bitterness of the fray.

What was his secret? It was simply this: he walked with God. He knew from the first that his course would be a brief one. His earliest letters bear the seal *The Night Cometh*. He felt that, in order to make the most of his meagre span of years, he must dwell in the secret place and abide under the shadow. God was always closer to him than breathing, nearer than hands or feet. I find him, in the course of his Jewish mission, in a crowded foreign city. 'How real God is!' he says to himself. 'He is the only person I can talk to!' On the very next page, I find him, by way of contrast, in the solitudes of the desert, not a soul in sight. 'How near God seems!' he remarks. He used to say that, even in days of sickness and depression, he could never really doubt, for God had given him such overwhelming manifestations of His presence when in the pulpit that he could live on the memory of those rapturous experiences in drearier and darker days.

His life was hid with Christ in God. It was in rapt communion with the unseen that he became infected by his Master's insatiable hunger for the souls of men. He wept over *Dundee* as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. A few years after his death, a young English minister visited St. Peter's to discover, as he explained, the secret of Mr. McCheyne's amazing influence. The sexton, who had

obstruction compels the waters surging in or out of the gorge force themselves through one or other of the narrow channels on either side. They manage this feat with propriety and tranquillity save only when the tide is actually on the turn. At such moments the scene resembles the confusion at the entrance to a public building when one unruly crowd is fighting frantically to get in whilst another is desperately struggling to get out.

It chanced that the tide was actually turning whilst we rested near the brink of the precipice. As the moon rose, transforming the expanse of ocean into a sheet of silver, the agitation of the surf increased. For a little while the passages on either side of the island were tumultuous cauldrons of watery commotion; and then, as the inflowing torrent gradually asserted its steady and increasing pressure, things quietened down again.

John and I watched the battle of the conflicting streams in silence until, with startling suddenness, he turned upon me with the remark that I have already recorded.

‘A parable, isn’t it?’ he asked; and, seeing my mystification, he elaborated his idea.

‘Well,’ he explained, ‘there are only two tides—the tide coming in and the tide going out. Similarly, there are only two kinds of religion. All religions but the Christian religion are like the sea when the tide *is* flowing out. It sucks the waters of the river into itself. It lies back and demands that the river shall empty itself into its own immeasurable basin. In the process, ~~the~~ river becomes narrower and shallower and feebler and poorer; but what does the sea care? “The sea does not exist for the rivers,” the wild, wild **waves** are saying; “*it* is the rivers that exist for the sea!” and it swallows them all up, leaving them puny little trickling streams. The religions of the heathen world are just like that: they are pitiless in their *infl*exible requirements, impositions and exactions.

‘But’, he continued, after turning to watch the movements of a young rabbit that seemed to have lost its way among the tufts and tussocks, ‘the Christian religion is like the sea when the tide comes rolling in. Infinity, without seeming to impoverish itself, pours itself into the thirsty little river-beds. On all the stony banks and

'When he spoke of my being alienated from God by my sins,' one woman declared, 'it seemed so terrible that I felt that hell itself would be some relief from the horror of it!'

'When, in his prayer, I heard him say, "*O Lord, Thou knowest that we love Thee!*" I felt that I would gladly give all that I ever hoped to possess to be able to say *that* to the Saviour!' another woman exclaimed.

Thus, literally, he was a living epistle. As men interpret, in a letter, the mind of the writer, so men read in him the very mind of Christ. And, as a letter need not be a long letter in order to be a love-letter, so, within the compass of his brief span of existence, he communicated to the hearts of all whom he met the sense of his Lord's everlasting love and pity and grace. It was said of Keats that he 'ensphered himself in thirty perfect years and died, not young'. The lovely tribute is even more fitting in the case of Robert Murray McCheyne.

Chapter LX

Unspeakable!

I

'**A** PARABLE, isn't it?' observed John Broadbanks, cryptically, after silently surveying for some minutes the picturesque panorama spread out at our feet.

'I suppose it *is*,' I hesitantly replied, 'for that matter, most things are. But what have you on your mind?'

John and Lilian had brought their little family to share our holiday with us at Taieri Mouth. On a lovely Sunday evening, whilst our wives were putting the children to bed, we had strolled out to the edge of the cliff, and, sprawling on the grass, were looking down on the swirl of waters in the estuary below.

The mouth of the river is partly blocked by a huge rocky island, rich in Maori legend and tradition, standing full in the sweep of the swiftly-flowing current. The presence of this formidable

the ocean, it is not really unspeakable. In what sense is the gift of God unspeakable?

Glancing at my concordance, I notice that, in the Bible, three things are said to be unspeakable—the gift of God; the joy that arises from the acceptance of that gift, the joy *unspeakable* and full of glory; and the words that Paul heard when he was caught up into Paradise, *unspeakable* words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Unspeakable! Now the fact is that the exercise of speech presupposes three things. It presupposes thought—the stuff of which speech is simply the oral expression. It presupposes language—the vehicle by which alone one person can converse intelligibly with another. And it presupposes *articulation*, sound, voice—the organ by means of which we convey our inmost feelings to the ear and mind and heart of another.

Thought—the matter of speech!

Language—the vehicle of speech!

Voice—the *organ* of speech!

To speak intelligently and intelligibly I must possess all three of these faculties—the faculty of *thought*; the faculty of *language*; the faculty of *articulation*.

But all three of these faculties are hampered by painful limitations. And the measure of their limitation is necessarily the measure of the unspeakability of God's unspeakable gift.

To begin with, my *thought* is baffled. I hear of God's gift; read of it; sing of it; but I do not understand it. *Unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given! God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son!* How can I begin to comprehend all this? How can my poor little mind grasp the eternal mystery of the Incarnation—*God manifest in the flesh?*

His name, it is written, shall be called Wonderful. Every child's name is called Wonderful. A mother looks into the face of the baby in her arms: she remembers that her friends have written begging her to tell them exactly what the baby is like: but how can she?

'You're too wonderful for words!' she mutters when she and her

muddy swamps, boats are lying stranded; but, as the tide comes in, they find themselves tossing on an expanse of shimmering waters. Every bay and inlet, every cove and creek, is flooded with the abundance of the ocean. The river becomes broader and deeper and mightier and richer all the time; and the sea is glad to have it so. "The rivers do not exist for the sea," the wild, wild waves are saying; "it is the sea that exists for the rivers!" and, filling up their aching vacuums, it transforms them into affluent and majestic streams. The Christian religion reveals to men the vision of deity pouring its glorious self into an exhausted and depleted humanity, giving, giving, giving all the time!

We chatted on like this for half an hour or so, and then detected in the distance the soft murmur of feminine voices.

'Ah, here they come!' exclaimed John, springing to his feet. And then, turning directly to me as the ladies approached slowly in the moonlight: 'There's something in it, don't you think?'

'There is indeed!' I replied. 'Don't blame me if I follow those lines at Mosgiel next Sunday; only what text should a man take?'

'Oh, my dear fellow, you can't go wrong,' John expostulated. 'Any text about God's giving-God *so loved the world that He gave* or -I tell you—*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!*'

'Why, I do believe they're sermonizing,' exclaimed Lilian in well-feigned disgust as she and the mother of my own children joined us. 'How dare you, sir?' she demanded of John. And, bidding us once more relax, they, too, sat down, and we all four enjoyed the music of the silver-crested waves for half an hour before returning to the cottage for the night.

II

I took John's text into my Mosgiel pulpit on the following Sunday. But, as soon as I began to wrestle with its profundities, a fresh problem emerged.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. Why unspeakable? It is true that the love of God, like the ocean itself, is incomprehensible and therefore indescribable. But, since one can speak of

life we express ourselves, not in stately diction and exquisitely balanced sentences, but in the awkwardness of the limbs, in the confusion of the face and with a stammering tongue. At such times the eyes become invested with an eloquence peculiarly their **own**; the twitching of the lips becomes significant; blushes and pallor and tears become **integral** parts of life's cryptic code of communication. It is when the heart is overflowing that the organs of speech perversely fail.

In the days to which I have already referred—the days in which I **companied** with John Broadbanks among the mountains and streams around Mosgiel—I one evening attended the farewell service of an old minister. The good man was one of New Zealand's pioneers. He came out as a young fellow on one of the very first emigrant ships and settled on the Taieri Plain within a few minutes' walk of the spot on which, long afterwards, my own manse was built. He spent all his ministerial life in the charge that he had himself built up; and now, on the evening that I so clearly recall, he was to bid his people farewell before going into retirement. I can see at this moment the crowded church: I recall vividly his **tall** and massive form, his snowy hair, his rich Scottish brogue. I can hear the eloquent and transparently sincere tributes paid to the **old** man by his elders, by his brother ministers and by the local authorities. And then there came the climax of the great occasion—the moment at which the retiring veteran was to reply. What would he say in closing a ministry of nearly fifty years—the fifty years in which the entire settlement had sprung into being? He was to address people in whose hearts and homes he had been **enthroned** for a couple of generations. Greatly beloved and held in highest honour, he rose, **stepped** forward, leaned heavily upon the rail and looked into the faces of the congregation. But no words came. After a long struggle with himself, he resumed his seat, which happened to be next my own. The Chairman stepped across, begged him to take his time and then to try again. He rose a second time—with the *same result*. During a musical interlude, we gathered round to encourage and hearten him; but, when he again essayed the excruciating task, he was no more successful.

baby, are alone together. 'Too wonderful! Too wonderful! I can see the sky in your eyes: I can see the sunshine in your smile: I can see God in your soul! There's earth in you; and there's *heaven* in you; and, I suppose, there's hell in you! There's all time in you, and all eternity in you! You are all the world that ever has been and you are all the world that ever shall be!'

She cannot begin to understand this wonderful, wonderful baby of hers. How then, if she cannot understand this human babe, can she begin to comprehend that other babe—the divine babe, the Babe of Bethlehem—God's unspeakable gift?

Then, too, language fails us. Like thought, it has its limitations. Since the world began, no man has been able, in so many words, to describe the perfume of a violet in such a way that a man with a defective sense of smell would understand and admire. No man has been able to describe an oratorio in such a way as to communicate its melodious splendours to a deaf mute. No man has ever been able to describe a sunset in such a **way** that a blind man could conjure up for himself that gorgeous riot of colour.

Even God could **not** express Himself adequately through the mechanism of language. It is too frail and too fragile a medium. It collapses in the hour of crisis. God reveals Himself in prophet and psalmist and apostle and sage: but a million Bibles would not tell me what Jesus tells me. What God could not say by means of a language, He said by means of a life. The Word was made *flesh*. It is the divine exposure of the essential impotence of verbiage.

And even the *voice* breaks down. Life brings to a man tense moments in which his whole soul is in his mouth; *he* feels that he must express himself or die; yet, confronted by such stupendous issues, his lips refuse their office and *his* tongue finds speech impossible. The old-time novelists made their gallant heroes propose to their lovely heroines in eloquent periods and *charmingly*-worded phrases; no sensible woman would believe in the sincerity of a suitor whose tongue became fluent with polished rhetoric at such a time. When the soul most aches for self-expression, one's speech becomes strangely broken and incoherent. In the crises of

I may *wholeheartedly accept* it—as a thirsty man accepts a glass of water, as a drowning man grasps a life-buoy. I may accept it with a glad and grateful heart and with every intention of enjoying and of using the boon to *the* utmost extent of my need.

And perhaps we have here the solution of a very ancient and very real problem. When he was but a lad of seventeen, David Brainerd, who afterwards became the seraphic evangelist of the North American Indians, was very angry with God because, while the New Testament bade him come to Christ, it did not tell him *how* to come. 'I thought', he says, 'that I would gladly come to Jesus, however difficult the path, if only I knew how; but I found myself, as it were, with a great gulf between me and Him, and with no directions as to getting through!'

Brainerd eventually saw that this was quite ridiculous. When a mother tells a child to come to her, she does not tell him how to come. He may come with a run or a jump or a skip or a bound; he may come laughing or crowing or shouting or singing: so long as he comes. There is scope in the love of God for an infinite variety of ways and means.

Robert Murray McCheyne brought his spiritual concern to a climax by attending the Communion. In taking the bread upon his lips, he took the broken body of his Saviour as his one hope of life eternal; and, in taking the cup, he signified his acceptance of the redeeming blood of Christ as his only ground of everlasting salvation. Others have adopted other means. Some have made their way to a penitent form: some have kneeled with the minister in his vestry or study: some have signed a written confession of faith.

All these are excellent, yet none is essential. The text suggests that all I need to do is to lift up my heart to God with an adoring, if inaudible, *Thank You!* Thanks be unto God for His goodness and grace! Thanks be unto God for the Gospel, the Church, the Scriptures! *Thanks be unto God most of all for the Saviour!*
Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

'It's no good; I can't do it!' I heard him murmur under his breath as he finally abandoned the effort.

In some respects it was the most eloquent and moving farewell which I have ever witnessed. He knew what he wanted to say: and he knew the language in which he wished to say it: but, in the crucial hour, his voice failed him.

So that it comes to this. The gift of God is unspeakable because it transcends my powers of comprehension. But if I could comprehend it, I should be able to find no language in which to express it. And if I could comprehend it, and could find such language, I should be so overwhelmed by the awe and the glory and the mystery and the wonder of it that my lips would refuse their office and my tongue would find speech impossible.

And even *if* I could comprehend it, and *if* I could find words to express it, and *if* I could command my powers of utterance, nobody would understand what I was saying. Like the things that Paul heard in Paradise, my hearers would be listening to *unspeakable* words-words that it is not lawful for a man to utter.

III

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift! His gift! And this raises still another question. For a gift, whether human or divine, necessitates some kind of reaction and response. What am I to do about it? *What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?* There are four alternatives.

I may ignore it; treat it as if the gift had never been proffered; behave as though I had never so much as heard of it.

I may *decline* it. It would be a dreadful thing to do and would require courage. Yet perhaps it would be no more blasphemous and no more dangerous than the adoption of the first alternative. Perhaps even Almighty God would rather have His gift categorically but politely refused than have it callously ignored, disregarded, and snubbed.

I may *formally accept* it-as one accepts a book that he never intends to read or a trinket that he never intends to wear,

They were all **three** of them unspoiled and unspoilable. Each knew heart-rending sorrows and crushing disappointments; each experienced moments of delirious exultation and rapturous triumph; yet each emerged from both ordeals unsoured and unspoiled. In the trough of adversity and on the crest of prosperity Charles Lamb was always Charles Lamb; he remained his modest pathetic, whimsical self; nothing weakened his faith, impaired his humility, or affected his perfect poise.

The haunting melodies **that** won for Thomas Moore **so** amazing a popularity are as enchanting as anything in the realm of poesy but what of his letters to his mother? In one of them, written when all London was at his feet, he tells her that he is feeling a little tired of the drawing-rooms of duchesses, and would love to be sitting with her in a **cosy** little cabin enjoying a good old-fashioned dinner of salt fish and Irish stew!

And everybody knows how, to the end of his days, Robert Burns was just Robert Burns-the same everywhere and to everybody. Has not Dr. Maclean Watt told us that *Sartor Resartus* was inspired by Carlyle's admiration for the way in which Burns would at any time excuse himself from the company of one of his aristocratic friends in Princes Street, Edinburgh, in order to shake hands with a ploughboy from Ayrshire whom they chanced to meet.

Or, turning from history to fiction, and from one sex to the other, why is Lorna Doone recognized as one of the most engaging heroines of romance? From the first page to the last we have to take John Ridd's word for it that she was indescribably beautiful and unutterably sweet; the author never actually sets her before us in such a light that we behold her charms with our own eyes and feel our hearts capitulate to her loveliness. Yet she is dear to all of us. Why?

When first John Ridd meets her, she is a little girl beside a babbling Devonshire stream, surrounded by a riot of primroses. When they meet again, years afterwards, she is still among the primroses, but she has ripened into a luscious young maidenhood. Perhaps discovering, with womanly instinct, that she has awakened

Chapter X

The Spoiled Child

A LITTLE child! Is there anything under the stars more beautiful? A little child, with all his wondering innocence, his exquisite simplicity, his delicious charm! Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of His disciples, not to tell the little child that he must become like Peter and James and John, but to tell Peter and James and John that they must become like that little child. *Except, He said, except ye become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

But a *spoiled* child! Is there anything under the sun more repulsive? A spoiled child with all his poutings and his simpering, his *hectorings* and his *bullyings*, his arrogance and his tantrums! A spoiled child, consumed by passion and selfwill, is a spectacle for men and angels. A spoiled child is one of life's consummate tragedies. He who spoils a little child is an outlaw against society.

With a great fondness in his heart and a great fear at the back of his mind, Paul once wrote a very tender letter to his converts, his spiritual children. *Beware, he says, lest any man spoil you!*

I

There are no people like the unspoiled people. Speaking generally, our literature contains two classes of men. There are the men whose works we admire without giving more than a passing thought to the writers themselves; and there are the men who win our affection quite apart from our attachment to their works. To take, almost at random, the names of an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman, there are Charles Lamb, Thomas Moore, and Robert Burns. They are literature's most lovable men; we like to think of them and to read of them and to talk of them; their very names stir a warmth in our hearts: but why?

II

Obviously, then, the lovable children are the unspoiled children: the lovable people are the unspoiled people; the lovable Christians are the unspoiled Christians.

A spoiled child is usually a petted and pampered child, a child that has known no correction or discipline: a child that has been too much sheltered and indulged: a child that has lost the spirit of a child.

As I write, it is blue-bell time in England. There rush back to my mind visions of woods all carpeted with blue; streams fringed with blue; hills draped in blue. On my study wall, so placed that my eye rests upon them whenever I lift it from my manuscript, are three coloured pictures of English landscapes in blue-bell time. Is there anything in the world more enchanting? I have known Australians to visit England, and, fascinated by the beauty of the blue-bells, resolve that they will transfer the loveliness to their own land. 'We will take the blue-bells back with us', I have heard them ecstatically exclaim, 'and we will cover the slopes of Mount Dandenong and Mount Macedon and Mount Martha!' But it all came to nothing. The blue-bells were planted and almost immediately perished. The Australian climate is no climate for them. They were slain by too much sunshine!

I once visited one of my people on his death-bed. He had lived a hard life, with many sorrows and many losses, but he did not complain.

'I was brought up in East Melbourne,' he said, 'and was led to Christ there. A revival had broken out in the church and quite a number of us young fellows made the great decision. We used to meet early on Sunday morning for prayer: we studied our Bibles together of an evening: and nothing could keep us from the Sunday services. Religion was a perfect revelry to us. In due course we all went into business and most of them prospered. Some of them are merchant-princes in Melbourne at this very hour. But,' he added, and his voice was husky with emotion, 'very few of them now take any interest in churches or in spiritual things. If I had

a dangerous sensitiveness in John's youthful breast, she reveals to him her origin. John learns to his horror that she is a child of the Doones-the most desperate and most dreaded brigands in the country.

'All around me', she explains, 'is violence and robbery, coarse delight and savage pain, reckless joke and hopeless death. There is none to lead me forward; there is none to teach me right; I live beneath a curse that lasts for ever.'

Surely so sinister an environment must leave some hideous taint on her gentle and impressionable spirit! But did it? Every reader knows that Lorna was like a lily growing in a coalmine. Her corrupt surroundings utterly failed to defile her. She was unsullied, unsoiled, unspoiled.

Later on, when John and Lorna are acknowledged lovers, Lorna discovers that, in reality, she is not a Doone at all! She is the Lady Dugal, one of the loftiest ladies in the land! She is suddenly summoned to London, and, her beauty bewitching the court, she is compelled to spend her days among princesses and palaces. Poor John is almost distracted. To him she is lost in a golden haze; she has vanished in a blaze of splendour. He feels that she is hopelessly beyond his reach; how can he ever hope to possess her? At last, in sheer desperation, unable any longer to endure the terrible strain, he sets out in search of her.

I have no space in which to tell of John's experiences in London. Let those who are so disposed read for themselves the sixty-seventh chapter of Blackmore's stately romance. It must suffice for my present purpose to say that the chapter ends with a sound of kissing, kissing, kissing on the palace stairs; that John returns to Devonshire with his face shining like the sun; and that the chapter is entitled 'Lorna is still Lorna'. That is the point. Lorna is for ever Lorna. Therein lies the elusive secret of her resistless charm. She can be spoiled neither by the revolting atmosphere of the robber-caves nor by the perfumed atmosphere of courts and castles.

know what it is; but it is that which, thirty years ago, made my work so delightful and effective.' Spoiled!

Yet, I have known the man who had drifted to return to his first anchorage; he sought his Saviour afresh and regained the joy of his early faith. I have known the student, recognizing that he was squandering more than he was gathering, kneel anew at his Master's feet in a passion of re-consecration; and, as they know who have read Mr. McFillan's *Memoirs*, that sorrowing minister discovered the real character of his loss and entered upon a period of prosperity and fruitfulness such as, in earlier years, he had never known.

That is precisely the point of Paul's argument. *Beware, lest any man spoil you*, he pleads. But how can I prevent this spoiling process? And how, if spoiled, can I regain the treasure I have lost.

In reply, Paul points his converts to Jesus, for, he says, in *Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily*. Draw heavily on Him: cleave closely to Him: lean hard on Him: make much of Him: and, the greater the hold that He establishes upon your heart, says Paul, the smaller will be the danger of your being numbered among God's spoiled children.

become wealthy, as they have done, I, too, might have drifted away. So perhaps *it's* as well', he concluded with a smile, 'that money and I haven't seen much of each other!' It is easy, like the child, to be spoiled by too much indulgence: it is easy, like the blue-bells, to be spoiled by ceaseless sunshine.

III

And the pity of it is that the damage can very seldom be repaired. Do spoiled children, I wonder, ever grow up to be unselfish, considerate, chivalrous, and kind? Perhaps! I do not know: it would be interesting to learn. I only know that the cracked vase can never be mended; the bloom can never be restored to the peach; the bird with the broken pinion never soars so high again.

Yet I must not generalize: the application of the principle must not be made too sweeping. Jeremiah tells us how he saw the vessel that had been marred in the making pressed by the potter into a lump of clay from which his deft fingers fashioned the shapely vessel of his dreams. I have seen something of the same kind happen again and again.

I have known a man to drift away from his first faith. The fires on the altar of his soul have died down. The vision has faded. The world, the flesh, and the devil have been too much for him. Spoiled!

I have known a young fellow, aflame with spiritual intensity and evangelistic passion, enter a theological college. There is no reason why, with the reading of many books, the pursuit of many studies, and the learning of many languages, his ardour should cool. Such things should not be; but, just now and again, they do occur. I have seen a man lose in spirituality what he gained in intellectuality. Spoiled!

'I feel,' says Donald McFillan, minister of Aberfeldie, in a letter written after he had been thirty years in the ministry, 'I feel that I am doing all that I used to do: I am reading and writing and preaching and visiting. I am working as hard as ever and working in the same way. Yet something has gone out of my life; I scarcely

between the lines they will come to the conclusion that the genial lecturer did not intend this morsel of sage philosophy to be applied exclusively to matters canine. He meant it for all kinds and conditions of men, especially for carpenters-carpenters who have the opportunity of encouraging goldsmiths.

Now these two men-the carpenter and the goldsmith-are representative and typical. The one operates upon wood; the other upon gold. The carpenter, with his plane and his hammer, his adze and his saw, represents those indispensable but unobtrusive workers who spend their lives in ministering to our common needs. An Oriental carpenter, like Joseph of Nazareth, spent *all* his time in building the people's cottages, in making and repairing their furniture and in supplying the farmers with their yokes and ploughs and wagons.

But the goldsmith! The goldsmith was an artist. In the days before industry was mechanized, no craft was held in higher esteem than the craft of the man who wrought in metal. Those who have read such biographies as the *Life of Benvenuto Cellini* know of the way in which *skillful* goldsmiths contended for the patronage and praise of prelates and princes. The carpenter represents a study in modesty; the goldsmith represents a study in magnificence. The carpenter stands for utility; the goldsmith stands for beauty. The carpenter is all prose; the goldsmith is *all* poetry. The carpenter's shop, with its litter of chips and shavings, is a vision of practical service; the goldsmith's studio, with its daintily-wrought and chastely-carved urns and goblets and vases, is a scene of dazzling splendour. The goldsmith is the aristocrat among craftsmen.

Yet it is not the goldsmith whose approval and commendation spur the carpenter to better work: it is the carpenter who, by his encouragement, moves the goldsmith to more perfect artistry. It is modesty that inspires magnificence. Life is often dominated by forces that, on the surface, do not appear dominating. Historians are never tired of pointing out that, all through the ages, the

Part Two

Chapter 1

The Carpenter and the Goldsmith

MANY years ago, **W**hen I was **p**reparing to enter college, a saying of Isaiah's greatly intrigued me. It has, indeed, teased my fancy ever since, although I have never preached from it, never expounded it, never even quoted it. It is the verse in which the prophet tells us that, in the days in which the people helped every one his neighbour, *the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith.*

The carpenter encouraged the goldsmith. The declaration seemed to me, fifty years ago, very beautiful and very suggestive; and it still appeals to me in the same way. Human nature is a very complicated organism; and it only rises to super-excellence under the influence of an infinite series of stimuli. Appreciation is one of those stimuli. The goldsmith produces more exquisite work than would otherwise have come from his hands because of the admiration and encouragement of the carpenter.

In his clever *Studies in the Art of Ratcatching*, Mr. H. C. Barkley urges aspiring sportsmen on no account to deny to their dogs their fair mede of praise. 'We humans', he says, 'often behave well and do good, not because it is our duty so to do, but for what the world will say and for the praise we may get. Dogs are not in all things superior to humans, and in this matter of praise I fear they are even inferior to us. They most dearly love praise, and a good dog should always get it for any and every little service he renders. Give it him, then, and give it him hot and strong when he deserves it, and he will be willing to do anything for you, and will spend his whole life worshipping you and working for you.' Mr. Barkley is talking of dogs; but there is a twinkle in his eye. And, in view of that tell-tale twinkle, Mr. Barkley's students may be pardoned for reading between the lines. And when they read

says, 'that I should sit here on the duchess's lawn and confess that I have held back from proposing marriage to the women I most admired because of what would have been my old nurse's opinion of them.' Yet so it always is, Our servants are often our masters. Life's loftiest authorities never derive their sanctions from rank, *office*, or station. The soul has coronations and enthronements of her own. The goldsmith often seeks, above every other reward, the approval and appreciation of the carpenter.

II

Men often do their best work, not with their own hands, but by imparting a new impulse and a fresh stimulus to hands more *skilful* than their own. The carpenter cannot carve a chaste design on a cup of burnished gold, but he may fire the goldsmith with the inspiration that leads him to achieve it.

Thanks to this law, many a man does his best work after he is dead. He is just getting into his stride when he is confronted by that formidable barrier, but he bravely resolves that it shall in no way impede his progress. The *reflection* is suggested by a striking sentence in Eileen Power's *Medieval People*. Having discussed the sensation created in the Middle Ages by the introduction of printing, she describes a sturdy little Genoese sea captain sitting on a pier near his ship, reading the Latin version of *Marco Polo's Travels*, fresh from the Press. As he peruses the stirring story his soul catches fire. If only he could have done it! What a pity that Marco Polo had explored the Orient before he himself was born! And then a wild idea excites his fancy. Polo had gone east; why should not he himself go *west*? There must be something *beyond* the Atlantic. On the spot, Christopher Columbus resolves to sail into the sunset. 'And thus', as Eileen Power puts it in summing up the story, 'Marco Polo discovered China when he was alive, and, after he was dead, discovered America.' The sentence expresses one of the cardinal principles of human history and achievement. Marco Polo cannot discover America; but he may inspire Christopher Columbus to do it.

islands have ruled the continents. The tiny things have mastered the tremendous ones. And, in the same way and on the same principle, it is not the goldsmiths who have shaped the destinies of the carpenters; it is the carpenters who have made possible the triumphs of the goldsmiths.

The kings to whom the heart swears allegiance are seldom crowned in virtue of social superiority. Let a win our **confidence**; and, even though we be goldsmiths, and he a carpenter, his coronation is secure. In social status he may rank above us or below us; it does not matter in ~~the~~ least. Life's loftiest authorities are scarcely ever enthroned. More often than not, the accents to which we yield the most unquestioning obedience come to us, not from a higher social plane, but from a lower. The voices that are most authoritative and most persuasive come to us, not from courts, but from kitchens.

Who does not remember the satisfying proportions of Richard Jefferies' *Gamekeeper*? Our prince of naturalists sketches him as he accompanies his **master** about the great estate. He is only a servant, and his master is a lord, And yet—'when a trusted servant like this accompanies his master, often in solitary rambles for hours together, dignity must unbend now and then, however great the social difference between them; and thus a man of strong individuality and a really valuable gift of observation insensibly guides his master'. And so it comes to pass that the old gamekeeper rules the estate like a lord, and his master does the gamekeeper's will like a slave. In the magnificent person of **David Elginbrod**, George MacDonald has given us a classical example of the same phenomenon. Sir Walter Scott, too, has accustomed us to the laird who lived **in** mortal **terror** of offending his old serving-man.

Or change the sex. In *The Rosary*, Mrs. Barclay makes the Hon. Jane Champion ask Garth Dalmain why he does not marry. And Garth tells her of old Margery, his childhood's friend and nurse, now his housekeeper and general mender and tender; old Margery, with her black satin apron, lawn kerchief, and lavender ribbons. 'No doubt, Miss Champion, it will seem absurd to you, Garth

in a voice unsteady by deep feeling, says: 'I came here to-day with hell raging in my heart; and, as a result of your sermon, I have entered into the peace that passeth all understanding!'

Or supposing that, as I leave the building, a woman, who had obviously been waiting for me, approaches me to tell me that she came to the church with a breaking heart, but is returning to her stricken home wonderfully soothed and comforted.

Neither this man nor this woman may possess the most elementary knowledge of the technique of sermon-construction. Yet their testimonies are very sweet to me. I am delighted that my sermon pleased the professor: it shows that conscientious and careful workmanship was brought to the preparation of my discourse. But, just as Dannecker liked the children to see beauty in his sculpture, so I find special satisfaction in the witness of these work-a-day elements in my congregation. The goldsmith whose work *excites* the admiration of the carpenter is the very best goldsmith of all.

III

The triumph of the ages has been the creation of goldsmiths by a Carpenter--the Carpenter!

Walk around any art gallery, listen to any oratorio, spend an hour in any library, peruse the records of the scientists, inspect the glorious masterpieces of the great architects, and ask yourself whether, but for that Carpenter, these goldsmiths could ever have been.

Wherefore, let every carpenter make it the height of his ambition to produce a really excellent goldsmith. He may be totally ignorant of the laws that govern the goldsmith's craft; but, whenever he sees a goldsmith producing work of real excellence, let him encourage that goldsmith to do something still more admirable.

Everybody who has read Uncle *Tom's Cabin*, or any book dealing with that period, knows the extraordinary authority that the devout slaves on the plantations acquired over their masters and mistresses. How many men of commercial standing and social eminence have been led into the Kingdom of God by the consistent lives and faithful witness of their subordinates? And how many

Sir James Barrie and others have familiarized us with the way in which, a generation or two ago, the poorest families in Scotland would cheerfully make the most heartbreaking sacrifices, and endure the most humiliating privations, in order that one boy in the family—‘a lad o’ pairts’—might go to the university and become a doctor or a minister. The carpenters encouraged the goldsmith. And is there anything more touching, in any of Paul’s epistles, than his lists of the brave but lowly souls who, themselves incapable of apostolic adventure and achievement, nevertheless made possible his own travels and his own triumphs?

In view of all this, I venture to suggest that he is a very foolish goldsmith who, concentrating on his professional technique, seeks to win only the approval of goldsmiths. He will miss a vast amount of inspiration and encouragement if his work leaves the carpenter cold. I fancy that this dangerous tendency is fairly common. The artist may prate of art for art’s sake and set himself to win the encomiums of Bohemia; but he will miss his richest reward if, in his paintings, ordinary mortals can discern no charm or loveliness. It is said of Dannecker that he doubted the success of any of his statues unless little children took pleasure in

be **very** wonderful, but unless it stirs the pulses and excites the emotions of men and women who are not themselves highly musical, it falls short of complete success.

Especially is this the case with the preacher. I prepare a sermon, I focus upon it all my powers. I summon to my aid all that my teachers, my books, and my experience have taught me. I view the manuscript with secret, and perhaps ill-concealed, satisfaction. I take the greatest possible pains in its delivery. In my congregation I notice a professor of theology. He tells me afterwards that he greatly admired the homiletical and exegetical construction of my sermon. Emanating from such a source, the words send little ripples of ecstatic satisfaction eddying through every nerve in my being. The goldsmith has pleased the goldsmith: what could I wish for more?

But supposing that, as I move among the people after the service, **a man, whose eyes are moist, clasps** my hand with **great fervour and,**

Chapter II

The Lost Christ

ONCE possessed a book-I cannot tell what became of it-that was filled from cover to cover with apochryphal records of the infancy of Jesus. There were wonderful stories of His causing flowers to spring up magically beneath His outstretched hand, stories of His restoring to His schoolfellows their lost or broken toys, stories of His causing the clay birds that His deft fingers had fashioned to spread their wings and fly away. Whether or not any of these legends are true, nobody knows; nor does it very much matter.

The striking thing is that, although every childhood is rich in arresting and attractive incidents, only one episode in the childhood of Jesus has been authentically preserved for us-the story of His being lost among the pilgrims of the high-road and found among the doctors in the Temple. Now why did the chroniclers depart from their extreme reticence in order to give us this one beautiful story?

I

Was it in order to warn us that the Saviour is easily lost? It is the old story: '*whilst thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone!*' In *The Days of His Flesh*, Professor David Smith shows how it probably happened in this case. The men and the women travelled in separate bands: a child might accompany either father or mother: Joseph took it for granted that Jesus was with Mary; Mary naturally concluded that He was with Joseph; and thus no alarm was felt by either. It was only when they met at night that the tragic discovery was made. Incredible as it sounds, it is easy to lose the Saviour.

Indeed, the most unlikely people lose Him. Let no minister or missionary say: 'I am an ordained preacher of His Word: it could never, never happen to me!' Let no elder say: 'I am a man of

worldly mistresses have been led to the feet of Christ by the simple faith and beautiful devotion of their maids?

Two lovely stories insist on recapitulation as I prepare to lay aside my pen.

The *first* is the story of the conversion of Charles Wesley, the man who, setting to music the greatest revival in our history, perpetuated it. At the age of thirty, he was lying desperately ill. 'A devout woman in the house, who assisted in nursing him, was seized with the conviction that she should speak to him about the salvation of his soul. But he was a clergyman and she only a servant! How could she venture on such an impertinence?' But she followed the gleam, uttered the faithful word, and led Mr. Wesley to the Saviour.

This was on Whit-Sunday, 1738, and, on the following Wednesday, the conversion of John Wesley followed.

The second story is the familiar story of Lord Shaftesbury and Maria Millis. Maria Millis was only a servant, a simple-hearted, affectionate Christian woman, true as steel to every conception of duty. 'She formed a strong attachment for the gentle, serious child,' Lord Shaftesbury's biographer tells us, 'and would take him on her knees and tell him Bible stories, especially the sweet story of the Manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary. It was her hand that touched the delicate chords and awoke the first music of his spiritual life.' It was Maria Millis who taught him the first prayer that he ever learnt; he used it constantly in later years; and, in his old age, and particularly in times of sickness, he very frequently found his tongue involuntarily framing those simple words.

'In her will', we are told, 'she left him her watch, a handsome gold one, and until the day of his death he never wore any other.' He was fond even to the last, of showing it. 'That', he used to say, 'was given to me by the best friend I ever had!'

'She told him the sweet story of the Manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary!' And thus she introduced him—a frail little lad of seven—to a Friendship that grew more intimate, more potent, and more fruitful as life went on. What more could any carpenter do for any goldsmith? I ask you,

her friends were telling her, that neither of them noticed that Jesus had been left behind.

The good is often the enemy of the best. The most excellent books may lead me to neglect my Bible: tireless service may exclude the possibility of secret devotion. In the porch of the little church near Hawarden Castle—the church in which Mr. Gladstone bowed in worship every morning and in which he loved to read the lessons on Sunday—there is a notice which, I understand, was placed there at Mr. Gladstone's own suggestion. It lays down several simple rules for worship and closes with this admonition: 'Be quiet and thoughtful as you go. On your way home be careful of your talk *or the world will slip back into your heart.*' The chatter of perfectly good people about perfectly good things may dispel the spirit of reverence and scatter like a cloud of frightened birds the uplifting thoughts gathered in the sanctuary. Bunyan tells us how he returned from church under deep conviction of sin; but he allowed his sensuous enjoyment of a sumptuous dinner to dissipate and obliterate the sacred impressions left by the sermon. The good may slay the best. The society of saints may deprive us of the society of the Saviour. {

III

It is possible to forfeit the presence of the Lord without knowing it. Mary and Joseph did. *Samson wist not that the Lord had departed from him.* We all like to be missed. The supreme tragedy of the spiritual life occurs when, the Saviour having withdrawn Himself from our company, we do not even notice that He has vanished. A man may go on with his work—even his philanthropic work, his church work, his evangelistic work, his missionary work—without noticing that he no longer enjoys the divine companionship of his Lord.

That, I imagine, is what Brother Lawrence meant when he entitled his invaluable little book *The Practice of the Presence of God*. I used to shrink from using that word 'practice'. It seemed to savour of drudgery, as when young people practise music, or

mature Christian experience and of long service: it could never happen to me!’ Let no city missionary, no Salvationist, no Sunday-school teacher, no Christian Endeavourer argue similarly. It ran happen; it does happen; it even happened to Mary!

We may decline about the devoted head of the Mother of Jesus a halo of extravagant superstition; yet we love her no less than those who do. We have all fallen under the spell of her sweet and pure and noble womanhood. I remember that, as a small boy, I loved occasionally to accompany my father to church on Sunday evening, partly because the evening service contained the *Magnificat*. Mary’s lovely song of adoration held an extraordinary fascination for my young mind; and *if, above* the other voices, I caught the clear, rich voice of one of the sopranos, I tried to persuade myself that I was listening to the song of the Virgin Mother as she so rapturously sang it: *My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!* To this day I feel that, for sheer grace of narrative, the Scriptures contain nothing more affecting than those passages at the beginning of Luke’s Gospel that must, in the nature of things, have been Mary’s contribution to the inspired record. It was the committal to paper, amidst waves of memory and floods of emotion and streams of happy tears, of that sublime and wondrous secret that she had so long treasured and pondered in her heart, the secret that had transfigured and irradiated the whole of her selfless and saintly life. Nobody loved Jesus as Mary loved Him. It was she who laid Him in the manger: it was she who fingered longest at the Cross. But there was a time when even Mary lost Him! Let those beware who fancy that their devotion renders them immune from such a danger!

II

Jesus may be elbowed out by the very choicest company, They were all pilgrims, men and women who, with the songs of Zion upon their lips, had been up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast. Yet, on the return journey, Joseph was so occupied with the delightful conversation of his companions, and Mary so engrossed in all that

George Macdonald says *never*. Never is a long time. It may not always be as bad as that. It depends. It depends upon the alacrity with which we become sensible of our deprivation and upon the diligence with which we set out in search of our lost treasure. Mary and Joseph took one whole day to lose Jesus: they found Him again in three. As things go, they *were very* forrunate. Few people regain their lost faith, or their lost vision, or their lost peace, or their lost joy so quickly. Wherefore let every man who enjoys the living presence of his Lord *practise* that presence assiduously lest, whilst his mind is occupied with other things, a divine withdrawal take place which will involve him in an aching sense of dereliction and a long, long quest.

V

If, to his unspeakable sorrow, so dire a disaster should overtake him, let him pay careful heed to the subtle hint that this story imparts. Mary and Joseph found their boy *in the Temple*. In the Temple, mark you! That is always a good place in which to look for Him. By some inexplicable refinement of spiritual perversity, *it* often happens that those who have been unhappy enough to lose the Saviour straightway neglect His house. If Mary and Joseph had followed that course, their wretchedness must have been indefinitely prolonged. In their wisdom, they made a bee-line to the Temple gates, and there, in the courts of the House of the Lord, they found Him!

They found Him, we are expressly told, *sitting in the midst of the doctors*, both hearing them *and* asking them *questions*. What could be more boy-like? Listening, as boys love to listen; inquiring, as boys love to inquire.

There are only two classes of people who ask intelligent questions - the people who, not knowing, wish to learn, and the people who, knowing, wish to teach. Of the first class, Alexander the Great is the natural representative: of the second class, Socrates is. It was with Alexander rather than with Socrates that Jesus associated Himself that day. Plutarch says that nothing about Alexander more impressed the ambassadors from Persia than his genius for

practise drawing, or practise shorthand. I preferred to think of the luxury of the presence, the revelry of the presence, the ecstasy of the presence. I was impressed by the unspeakable delight of awakening each morning to the sweetness of His smile, of passing through each common day in a palpitating consciousness of His nearness and of closing my tired eyes every night under the fragrant breath of His benediction.

But I see now that Brother Lawrence's word is the right word. It is good to practise the presence, to realize it, to test it, to make sure of it.

O Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord,
 Forgive me if I say
 For very love Thy precious Name
 A thousand times a day!

It is good to speak to Him even though I have nothing particular to say; it will intensify my recognition of His immediate immanence; it *will* unconsciously move me to live my whole life to His approval and delight. There is no greater mistake than to take His presence for granted. Joseph and Mary did so, and their easy-going assumption involved them in long hours of mental anguish.

IV

For *it* took them three days to repair the loss they had sustained in one, and at least four days to regain the point at which they had awakened to their loss. *They, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey---one day. And then: It came to pass that, after three days, they found Him---three days! And those three days were the longest days and the cruellest days and the most miserable days that Mary and Joseph ever knew. It is so easy to lose our spiritual heritage: it is so very difficult to recapture it. It may vanish in a flash. As George Macdonald so sadly sings:*

Alas, how easily things-go wrong!
 A sigh too much or a kiss too long,
 And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
 And life is never the same *again!*

lips may not be the Son of God; but he may be next door to it. And even though he be among the lowliest, the simplest and the dullest, the teacher who gives that boy of his best will one day hear a voice that is like the sound of many waters, say: Inasmuch as ye did *it* unto one of *the* least of these, ye did it *unto Me!* And so that happy teacher will discover with a sublime surprise that the boy who asked the question was the Son of God after all!

Chapter III

A Garden of Girls

IF history anywhere treasures a domestic record comparable with the record of George Browne Macdonald and his wife Hannah, its production would make a valuable addition to the volume of our real romances.

George Browne Macdonald, a Methodist minister, inherited from his remote ancestors the traditions of the Scottish highlands, and from his immediate progenitors the traditions of the Methodist parsonage. His father, James Macdonald, was a man of fine physique, striking personality, extensive learning—especially as a linguist—and intense spirituality. Entirely self-educated, he was ordained at the suggestion, and possibly at the hands, of Mr. John Wesley. Hannah, the wife of George, was a Welsh girl, the daughter of a native of the Vale of Clwyd. To this pair, George and Hannah, were born seven children, and those seven children form as remarkable a group as ever graced a single household.

I

One of the daughters, Georgina—of whom I shall presently have more to say—gives us a charming picture of the home of her girlhood. It was a Puritan home of the best kind. The father, George, was an omnivorous reader. He possessed a library of more than a thousand volumes, each of which had to be carefully packed by poor Hannah every three years when the exigencies of the

asking pertinent and penetrating questions. The biographies of Sir Walter Scott, Napoleon, Darwin, and Carey stress the same trait. The modesty of these *men* drove them to ceaseless interrogations, and their inquiries stored their minds with the wisdom that made them great. The questions that Jesus asked in the Temple *that day*—the questions that so astonished the *doctors*—formed an index to the lovely life that followed.

VI

He was found in the midst of the doctors, asking them questions. Have a good look at the expression of curiosity and surprise on the face of Joseph as, an innocent eavesdropper, he listens to the questions asked by this boy of twelve. Why, he says to himself, why is He putting these questions to the *doctors*? Why did He not ask *me*? That is the point. A boy of twelve will ask questions of outsiders that he would *never* dream of submitting to his parents.

But there is no need for perturbation or alarm. The parents' extremity is the teacher's opportunity. The father and mother recognize, with a humiliating sense of helplessness and perhaps a pardonable pang of affectionate jealousy, that there are subjects on which, in their own presence, their boy's lips are sealed. If, to the teacher, that boy offers his confidence, let the teacher embrace the golden opportunity with ready sympathy and with profound thankfulness. And let the parents rejoice that, in the person of the teacher, the boy has found so capable a friend.

He was found in the midst of the doctors, asking them questions. Listening to those questions, the doctors marvelled at the insight and perspicacity which they betrayed. But never for a moment did they suspect that the eyes that gazed so wonderingly, so wistfully, so hungrily into theirs were the eyes of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world!

No; they did not know! That is the pity of it: we never *know*! Let every teacher of boys and girls pay close heed to this pregnant story. You never know whose face it is that looks inquiringly, pensively, eagerly into yours. That boy with the question on his

John Lockwood Kipling, Head of the Lahore School of Art. Falling in love on the spot, the young people married and went to India. Later, when a baby boy was born to them, they named him after the lake that held for them such romantic associations, It was not until his third year that the child visited England. A family re-union was arranged at Bewdley, a sequestered beauty-spot in the Severn Valley, to welcome the party from overseas. Little Rudyard impressed everybody, alike by his painful shyness and by the quaintness and novelty of such remarks as did occasionally trickle from his lips.

Whilst, for example, the grown-ups were all chattering merrily in the drawing-room, Rudyard wandered off in solitude to explore the stately old house for himself. Pitying his loneliness, a servant took him in hand, explaining to him the character of the various apartments. The youngster listened in silence, and then, the tour of inspection completed, rushed to his mother in the drawing-room, exclaiming in fierce indignation, 'Mummy what do you think? They've taken the very best room in the house for themselves!' Mrs. Lockwood Kipling held the reputation for many years of being the wittiest woman in India.

II

When Georgina married a young painter, Edward Burne-Jones by name, there was nothing to suggest that her struggling young husband would become, in many respects, the most commanding figure in the art world of his day. 'At the time of our marriage,' says Lady Burne-Jones in her *Memorials*, 'neither my father nor my brother had any idea of Edward's genius. The only thing they troubled about was character.' Yet Sir Edward Burne-Jones, largely inspired by his beautiful and brilliant wife, rose to the highest possible pinnacle of fame in his profession. The triumphs of his skill adorn the noble fanes and the classical salons of the Old World, whilst our Australian galleries proudly boast several valuable specimens of his exquisite handicraft.

As a boy, nothing excited Rudyard Kipling more than the prospect of a visit to Aunt Georgie at The Grange in North End Road. He derived an extraordinary thrill from having to stand at the iron gate, to reach up to the open-work iron bell-pull and, having rung it, to await the arrival of the servant who admitted him into the realm of so much felicity. Later on, when the author of *Kim*, *The Jungle Books*, and the *Recessional* set up house for himself, he craved, and obtained, that bell-pull from The Grange, in order that other boys, visiting him, might know the ecstasy that he once enjoyed.

III

In 1866 the Macdonalds tasted the excitement of three weddings within three days. These included a double wedding, each, from a historical point of view, a wedding *de luxe*. Agnes, far-famed for her beauty, became the bride of Edward Poynter, destined, as Sir Edward Poynter, to become President of the Royal Academy and one of the most eminent painters of all time. On the same day, Louise, the fourth daughter, allowed herself to be led to the altar by Mr. Alfred Baldwin, and lived to see the child of their union, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, twice become Prime Minister of Great Britain.

As boys, the two cousins-Rudyard Kipling and Stanley Baldwin-saw a good deal of each other. Stanley occasionally came to stay with the Kiplings at a lonely old farmhouse on the edge of Epping Forest. Rudyard enjoyed the reputation of being a particularly innocent and harmless kind of boy as long as he was by himself, but, as soon as his cousin arrived, he got into all sorts of scrapes. 'That young Baldwin does your boy no good!' the farmer told the Kiplings.

Rudyard cherished a wholesome dread of the penalties in which such escapades frequently involved him. On one occasion he was walking with the father of the future Prime Minister on the lawn at Bewdley. The embryo poet pointed to a gorgeous bed of geraniums. 'Uncle Alf,' he solemnly exclaimed, 'if you tread on those flowers, William [the gardener] will pull your ear!' The

terrible warning was probably based on personal experience. Kipling used to say that in those days Stanley Baldwin got him into tons of trouble. The future statesman would hide in the cucumber frame, ruining the cucumbers, and leave poor Rudyard to face the music. His nurse and the gardener always said that Stanley Baldwin was mighty hard to catch.

IV

Strangely enough, most of Lord Baldwin's biographers—Mr. Wickham Steed, Mr. John Smith, Mr. A. G. Whyte and the rest—aver that the Macdonald family consisted of *four* girls and two boys. Such a mis-statement does the gravest injustice to one of the most vivacious, one of the most radiant, and one of the most lovable ladies of her time. There were to be sure, two *brothers*—Harry who, after a distinguished career at Oxford, went to America, and Frederick, who, following the footsteps of his sires, entered the Methodist ministry. As a preacher, an ecclesiast, and an author, Frederick achieved the highest distinction. He became President of the Conference in 1899 and visited us here in Australia in 1908.

But no historian of this amazing family should lose sight of Aunt Edith, the youngest of the five girls. She was, in many respects, the most scintillating of them all. As a child, her sprightly movements and sparkling witticisms kept the entire household smiling. On one occasion she was seated on a little stool in front of the fire with her four sisters grouped around her. Surveying the four faces, one after the other, she solemnly exclaimed, 'Oh, daughters of my father's house!' And it was quite common for her to burst into a room, in which her sisters were gossiping, with the exclamation, 'What about what?' and to insist that the conversation should, for her benefit, be recommenced.

Devoting herself to the care of her ageing patents, Edith never married. On the death of the old people, she made her home with the **Baldwins** at Stourport in Worcestershire. Here, **from** time to time, came the Burne-Jones, the Kiplings, and the Poynters,

attracted in no small measure by the singular fascination of Aunt Edie. A lady of rare culture, infinite sweetness, and sterling strength of character, Edith filled every circle that she adorned with light and laughter.

Like her sisters, she inherited from her mother a passion for music and poetry. Of literature, too, thanks to Hannah, they were all enamoured. Louise, indeed, the mother of Lord Baldwin, wrote a number of popular novels--Where *Town and Country* Meet, *Richard Dare*, *The Shadow on the Blind*, *The Story of a Marriage*, and the rest.

Edith, too, published a dainty little brochure entitled *Thoughts on Many Themes*. And in the little church near her home, in which every window was designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, there is an exquisite grape-vine altar frontal, perfectly worked in untarnishable gold-thread, and looking for all the world like a sheet of beaten gold, to the weaving of which Edith Macdonald devoted ten happy years of her long and lovely life. She lived to be eighty-eight.

In its obituary notice on the death of Frederick Macdonald, the brother, the London *Times* remarked that the home from which the greatly-gifted President and his five remarkable sisters sprang was a home in which there was very little money but any amount of goodness. As we survey the historic homes that were afterwards graced by the children of that modest Methodist parsonage--the homes of the Poynters, the Kiplings, the Burne-Jones, the Baldwins, and the Macdonalds--it is pleasant to reflect that the sweet fragrance of that simple goodness proved so penetrating and was blown so far.

Chapter IV

Jesus, Lover of my Soul

IT is Monday morning. And, as I review the services of the past day, the memory that rushes most pleasantly upon my mind is the memory of the last hymn:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
 Let me to Thy bosom fly,
 While the nearer waters roll,
 While the tempest still is high:
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life be past!
 Safe into the haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last!

As I stood in the pulpit during those closing moments of the day's worship, I was profoundly impressed by the fervour and intensity with which the people sang it. There was something about it. I asked myself what that something was. And to that problem I address myself this morning.

I

In pursuing this fascinating study, I propose, as the lawyers say in Court, to put in a number of exhibits.

My *first* exhibit is a photograph of a monument in Westminster Abbey. It is the only monument to a pair of brothers to be found there. The brothers thus memorialized are, of course, the brothers Wesley. At the top are the two names, with the dates of their births and deaths. In the centre is a plaque representing their two faces; with, beneath it, John's triumphant death-bed boast: 'The best of all is, God is with us!' And, at the foot, is a bas-relief, depicting John preaching to a motley multitude in the open-air, with the inscription: 'I look upon all the world as my parish.'

On Friday evening in an idle moment, I turned the dial of my wireless set, wondering what I should find on the air. I chanced upon a debate on the question of the limitation of families. Into the pros and cons of that delicate problem I shall not now enter. I am only reminded of it by the circumstance that John Wesley was the fifteenth child of his parents and Charles the eighteenth, whilst Susannah, their mother, was her father's twenty-fifth child. One shudders to think of what would have happened-or *not* happened-if the Wesleys of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had believed in the limitation of families.

For, in the eighteenth century, England, under the inspired

leadership of these two brothers, was swept by a religious revival so overwhelming, so dynamic, so irresistible that it affected—vitality, fundamentally, and permanently—every phase of our national life. In days when ancient thrones were tottering and hoary institutions crumbling, it preserved for us, as Lecky has shown, our national integrity and respect. The country was born again. Apart from the direct spiritual fruitage of the revival, the by-products of that transfiguring cataclysm were literally legion. Social reforms were effected: slavery was abolished: industrial wrongs were righted: the plague—the spectre of the centuries—was banished by purer standards of living and saner systems of sanitation: whilst philanthropic and benevolent institutions sprang up like mushrooms on a misty morning. If Susannah Wesley, that twenty-fifth child, had never appeared; or if John and Charles, the two boys at the tail-end of her own enormous family, had never been born, the world would never have known what it had missed; but its loss would have been stupendous.

II

My second exhibit is a newspaper cutting. Unhappily, it is not dated; but the journal from which I snipped it went out of existence many years ago, and the extract itself is yellow with age. It says that Mr. Charles Wesley was one day sitting by an open window of his home, enjoying the fresh spring air and the fragrant breath of the garden below. All at once, the element of tragedy disturbed the tranquillity around him. His attention became focused upon the frantic flutterings of a sparrow that was attempting to elude the pursuit of a hawk. In its terror, the tiny creature darted hither and thither, always to be followed by its tormentor. Then, just as Mr. Wesley thought that the little bird's strength was exhausted, and that it must miserably succumb, it flew straight towards him and buried itself in the folds of his ample coat. Mr. Wesley, according to this newspaper-cutting, was himself in circumstances of grave anxiety at the moment, and fancied that he saw in the incident that had so deeply moved him a

parable of his own deliverance. Reaching for a sheet of paper, he wrote:

**Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly!**

And thus was born the hymn that my congregation sang so feelingly last night—the hymn that has been a comfort and inspiration to millions.

I notice that the modern experts on hymnology declare this dainty narrative to be of doubtful authenticity. I sometimes wonder on what their **scepticism** is based. I have reasons of my own for clinging to the story until it is absolutely torn from my grasp. And this brings me to my third and *fourth* exhibits.

During my college days, more than fifty years ago, it was my good fortune to preach on Sundays at a pretty little village in Epping Forest, a pretty little village from which, incidentally, I brought away a pretty little villager as a souvenir. But she was not the only souvenir. For here on my desk at this moment are a paper-knife and a little casket, both of solid oak. In the construction of the casket there is no joint anywhere; it is a masterpiece of exquisite carving. It chanced that, in that village congregation of mine, there was a carpenter named Somner who was good enough to tell me that my poor 'Prentice ministry had been a means of grace to him. On the night before I sailed for New Zealand he brought me these gifts.

'Some time ago,' Mr. Somner said, 'I was employed on structural alterations to the house that was once occupied by Mr. Charles Wesley. The window-sill on which Mr. Wesley was leaning when the sparrow flew to his breast had to be removed, and, unhappily, was broken in the process. I managed to obtain a large splinter of it from which I have carved this paper-knife and casket. You will make me very happy if you will accept them and take them with you to New Zealand!' And, as a consequence, here they still are!

This, of course, proves nothing. But it serves to remind me that, fifty years ago, the story of the sparrow and the hawk was generally accepted; and, on the face of it, it would appear probable that those who lived fifty years nearer than we do to Mr. Wesley's time were as likely to know the facts as those who stand half a century farther away.

III

I confess frankly that I do not understand the Wesleys, and I think the more of them because of my failure in that respect. I should think less of Almighty God if I could understand Him.

I am completely mystified, for example, by their missionary adventure. As soon as they were ordained, they both sailed for America, John as a missionary to the Red Indians, and Charles, although nominally as secretary to General Oglethorpe, with the same high end in view. Yet they both assure us that they were utterly unregenerate at the time; they were not Christians; they had little or nothing to do with the Indians; they spent all their time at cross purposes with the authorities and the settlers; they were like square pegs in round holes; they simply did not fit. They realized that they were pitifully out of their element. Charles returned to England almost at once; John followed him eighteen months later.

This brings me to my fifth exhibit—a copy of John Wesley's *Journal*. 'It is two years and four months', John says, on his arrival home, 'since I left my native country to teach the Indians of Georgia the nature of Christianity; but what have I myself learned in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected, that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God!' This is a terrible piece of self-condemnation; and John afterwards felt that it was too positive and too drastic; for, in revising his *Journal*, he adds the footnote: 'I am not sure of this.'

But whether we regard John as a converted or as an unconverted man at the time of his return from America, there can be no doubt about Charles. And this brings me to my *sixth* exhibit—the journal of Charles Wesley. At the time of John's return from America, Charles, who had been more than a year in England, was very ill. He was visited by Peter Bohler.

'Do you hope to be saved?' Bohler inquired.

'I do!' replied Charles, and Bohler asked him on what ground.

'On the ground that I have used my best endeavours to serve God,' poor Charles answered. Bohler shook his head, obviously dissatisfied.

'I thought him', writes Charles, 'very uncharitable, saying in my heart, "What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to!"'

This speaks for itself. Whether or not any work of grace had gone forward in the soul of John, it is clear that Charles, at any rate, is still in darkness. He was a very long, long way as yet from:

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.

He had not begun to realize that desperate need which ~~was~~ ^{the} wringing from his lips the heartbroken cry:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly!

But the day of his redemption was drawing near.

It was upon Charles that the light first broke. On ~~Whit-~~ Sunday, 1738, he was still desperately ill. He was staying with a Mr. Bray, whose sister, a simple and devout soul, was doing her best to nurse him. All at once it was borne in upon this good woman that she should speak plainly to her guest about the salvation of his soul. She shrank in horror from the ~~suggestion~~. He was a clergyman: she was but a servant. What right had she to presume so far?

In an outbreak of emotion which almost rendered her voice inaudible, she told her brother of her perplexity. The two prayed together. Mr. Bray then told his sister that she had no option: she must follow the gleam. Trembling under a consciousness of her own unworthiness, she approached the minister's bedside: pointed him to the Saviour; and led him into the life everlasting.

That was on Sunday, May 21. John's deliverance soon followed. For it was on the Wednesday of that same week that John attended the memorable meeting at Aldersgate Street and passed through that transfiguring experience, the record of which has become one of the spiritual landmarks of our history. Charles, of course, was not present: he was still sick in bed. But, as soon as the meeting

at Aldersgate Street broke up, John, with a number of kindred spirits, hurried to the bedroom of Charles and excitedly told the good news. Charles made it the occasion of the re-dedication of his own life; and the two brothers, with their friends, sang together the hymn which Charles had written a day or two earlier to celebrate his own conversion, and which I *will* make my seventh and last exhibit:

Where shall my wondering soul begin?

How shall I all to heaven aspire?

A slave redeemed from death and sin,

A brand plucked from eternal fire,

How shall I equal triumphs raise,

Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?

O how shall I the goodness *tell*,

Father, which Thou to me hast showed?

That I, a child of wrath and hell,

I should be called a child of God,

Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,

Blest with this antepast of heaven!

And so the work of grace was complete. The two brothers whose names appear on this monument at Westminster Abbey had clasped each other's hands in the brotherhood of the Kingdom of God.

IV

During the years that followed, without any organization or collaboration, these two brothers changed the face of England. They seldom met; they saw little of each other; yet the work of each dovetailed most perfectly with the work of the other. From early morning until late at night, John rode up and down the country, preaching three or four times a day the everlasting Gospel. And, as the consequent revival swept across the land, Charles caught its spirit and perpetuated it in song. He wrote more than six thousand hymns, including *Jesus*, Lover of My Soul, of which Henry Ward Beecher said that he would rather have written that hymn than enjoy the glory of all the kings that have ever reigned. John set the country weeping, Charles set it singing,

and those tears of bitter repentance and those songs of plenteous redemption were the outward and visible evidence of the mightiest spiritual surge in the nation's experience.

Charles Wesley's place in history is typical. Every religious quickening in the history of the ages has immortalized itself in song. To take an illustration from the happenings of our own time, we have forgotten all that Mr. Moody said, but we still sing the hymns that Mr. Sankey taught us. The principle has always held. The spirit of Hebrew devotion lingers in the Book of Psalms; the faith of the early Christians lives in the *Te Deum*; the choicest life of the medieval monasteries is bequeathed to us in the hymns of men like Bernard of Clairvaux; the age of the Puritans is revived in the stately melody of Milton. And, in the same way, the movement that brought new life to the world in the eighteenth century stands crystallized in the throbbing verse of Charles Wesley. His ministry, as Dr. J. W. Bready says in his *Before and After Wesley*, his ministry went to the very heart and core of human life. 'It pointed the relationship between Earth and Heaven, between Time and Eternity; it radiated an atmosphere of peace and progress; it fostered human fellowship and gladness; it symbolized the triumph of faith and the immortality of the soul. All this was expressed in music at once lyrical, dignified, soulful, and sweet. It gave the English-speaking world its richest heritage of sacred song.' The minstrelsy of Charles Wesley was, in a word, the epoch-making revival set to deathless music.

V

This explains the mystery that captivated my mind last night as I listened to the people singing:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
 Let me to Thy bosom By,
 While the neater waters roll,
 While the tempest still is high:
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life be past!
 Safe into the haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last!

Consciously or unconsciously, the people, as they sang the hymn, were caught in the sweep of the tremendous movement that gave it birth, whilst each individual worshipper found it the perfect expression of his own deep need. On the wings of that inspired song tempest-tossed souls find the heavenly shelter that offers perfect peace.

Chapter V

The Warrior's Unknown Tomb

I WAS admiring yesterday a noble painting. It was entitled *The Sepulchre of Moses*. It represents the awesome, almost terrifying, scenery amidst which Israel's immortal leader was laid to rest. It is what Sir Walter Scott would call a vale of cairn and scaur. In every direction are towering summits, with their splintered peaks and jagged pinnacles, their scarped crags and beetling cliffs. The whole valley is a place of melancholy recesses, narrow defiles, and dark ravines. Everything about it is wild, weird, precipitous, desolate, and grand. On the loftiest eminence an eagle stands poised, with wings outspread in readiness for flight. It was to this frowning solitude that Moses, the Man of God, turned his face when his life's brave work was done. So Moses, *the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab: and the Lord buried him over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth his sepulchre to this day.*

I

Near one of the loftiest summits, the old traditions say, Moses came upon three archangels--Michael, Gabriel, and Uriel--busily engaged in hewing out a grave. It was almost finished, and steps had been cut in the rock leading down to the floor of the tomb. Moses asked for whom it was intended.

'For one', said Michael, 'dear unto our Lord.'
 And Moses looked around him for some sign
 Of a dead body, whereat Gabriel spake;
 'This grave, O Man of God, is meant for thee!'

Taking his hand, they led him down the steps
 And then took up their places, one on either side,
 And one at the grave's head. Then, suddenly,
 A Presence shone with light ineffable
And took the vacant place at the grave's foot.
'Lie down,' It said, 'and close thine eyes and sleep!'

'But Lord, I am afraid,' Moses replied,
 'For I have sinned and sadly wounded Thee!'

'Thy sins are blotted out,' the Presence said,
 'Thy service only is remembered'
 Then, like a tired child, he laid him down;
 The Presence bent above him, lip to lip;
 And, in the sweetness of that lingering kiss,
 The soul of Moses left its clay behind.
 He lay like some chaste statue finely carved.
 The angels filled the grave so cunningly
 That no man ever found it to this day.

In wandering through Westminster Abbey I have often been impressed by the fact that the immortal names inscribed upon its stately monuments divide themselves into two classes—the heroes who have been buried by the hands of men and the heroes who have been buried by the hands of God. Some sleep beneath the Abbey floor; but others rest in distant and unknown graves, Arctics there, for example, any more moving inscriptions in the Abbey than the epitaphs written by Lord Tennyson for the memorials of Sir John Franklin and General Gordon? 'Not here!' he says of Franklin:

Not here! the White North hath thy bones, and thou,
Heroic Sailor Soul!
 Art passing on thy happier voyage now
 Towards no earthly Pole!

And of General Gordon, whose body was lost, not among Arctic snows, but among tropic sands, he wrote:

Warrior of God, man's friend, not laid below,
But somewhere dead, far in the waste Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth hath borne no simpler, nobler man.

'Not here!' 'Not laid below!' These are men of the order and quality of Moses.

I remember, many years ago, being deeply touched by a letter that the postman brought me. A few months earlier a young Australian student of the finest type, impressed by the importance of the secrets that these vast lands still hold within their grasp, set out into the unknown to solve at least one of those geographical riddles. But, instead of lessening the number of our Australian mysteries, he added still another to the volume. For, sad to say, he was never seen again. Search parties, led by his father, in association with expert bushmen, set out to scour the difficult country into which he had plunged, but they returned **empty-handed**. When the incident had faded from the columns of our newspapers, I one morning received a letter from the mother of the young explorer. She told me that, in those agonizing days in which she was waiting, waiting, waiting for the news that never came, she felt a sudden impulse to read one of my books. Taking it from the shelf, and opening it at random, she found herself confronting a chapter entitled The *Undertaker*. 'I felt', she wrote, 'as if I had touched a snake, and, in my involuntary horror, I hurled the book to the far corner of the room, where it fell behind a large armchair.' Reflecting on the incident during the sleepless night that followed, it occurred to her that she had judged the book hastily. Why had she been so strongly moved to read it unless there was something in it that might brace and comfort her? In the early morning she returned to the **empty** sitting-room, retrieved the book from behind the armchair, and resolutely forced herself to read the chapter from which she had so violently recoiled. She then discovered that it was written to show that whilst men who die in their beds have to rely upon the services of human undertakers, there are great commanders who go down with their ships, gallant airmen who vanish with their planes, brave explorers

who leave their bones to bleach on the trails that they have so gallantly blazed, and countless heroes upon other fields who are buried, like Moses, by the hand of the Lord, no man knowing the place of their sepulture. 'Then,' my good friend wrote, 'I was wonderfully comforted. I felt that my boy was in God's hand and under his care; and I realized that, even if he never came back, I could think of him as a member of that shining company who have been buried like Moses by the Lord's own hand!'

II

Southey, in his *Life of Nelson*, congratulates the hero of Trafalgar on the hour at which he died. Is it conceivable that he could have enhanced the *lustre* of his name by living longer? Moses could not have chosen a more propitious moment for his departure, though the people were passing, not only from one land to another, but from one life to another. They were forsaking the nomadic for the agricultural and the military. Obviously, they needed a new leader. The work of Moses was done, and no sensible man wishes beyond that point, to linger on.

By dying on Mount Nebo, Moses was saved from the bitterness of disillusionment. When I read of the troubles that overtook the people after entering the Promised Land, I feel thankful that Moses was not there. It would have broken his heart. In his old age, with all his ambitions realized, Max Muller wrote that 'the dream of the reality was better than the reality of the dream'. It was given to Moses to enjoy the beauty of the dream and to be spared the bitterness of the reality.

Moreover, if Moses had entered the Promised Land, and had been buried there, his monument would have been regarded as the monument of a notable Palestinian. It would have been a tragedy of the first magnitude. For who thinks of Moses as a Jew? He is the most outstanding cosmopolite of the ages. With his Levitical code and his Ten Commandments, he *has* been Prime Minister of every Christian country through countless centuries.

No statesman at this hour would dare to legislate in the teeth of Moses. A man fashioned on so titanic a mould ought not to be imprisoned in a mausoleum or a vault. It is fitting that, buried in a sepulchre that no man knoweth, he should become the property of the ages.

III

It is commonly assumed that Moses was denied the privilege of leading the people into the Promised Land because God was angry with him for having *smitten* the rock instead of merely speaking to it. By smiting the rock, it is argued, he made it appear that he had made the water to gush forth by some magic of his own; by commanding the rock in the name of the Lord to yield its life-giving streams, he would have ascribed the glory of the deed to its true source. There *is* some ground for this interpretation; but *it* must not be pressed too far.

It reminds me of the lady whose little daughter displeased her. 'Maggie,' she said sternly, 'you are very naughty to have disobeyed me: you must go to bed to-night immediately after tea!' Tea was usually at five and Maggie went to bed at eight. On that particular night, however, tea was served very late; so that the dreadful threat was carried into execution with a minimum of discomfort to Maggie.

Moses was certainly denied the honour of leading the people into the land, but whether or not this was a real deprivation it is difficult to say. To begin with, he was permitted, from Pisgah's lofty height, to see the land, in its lengths and its breadths, as few of his associates ever saw it. In one of the most eloquent passages of his essay on Lord Bacon, Macaulay describes the magnificent panorama that Moses surveyed on that day of days. And, in his *The Land and the Book*, Dr. W. M. Thomson has written of the incomparable and almost incredible view of the whole land to be obtained, under favourable conditions, from the summit of Mount Pisgah. Like a beautiful coloured map, the country towards which he had led the people, the country of so many dreams, lay unrolled before his astonished eyes. He saw it as no other man ever saw it,

and as he himself could never have seen it had he remained with the host on the plains below.

In that moment of ecstatic vision, he beheld the land in all its loveliness--the land that, for the time being, he was forbidden to enter. But, fifteen centuries later, the embargo was removed and Moses entered the Promised Land after all! He appeared in Palestine in the hour of Palestine's glory; the hour in which, over those holy fields, there walked those blessed feet that were destined to be pierced for *our salvation*. Of the burial on Mount Nebo Mrs. Alexander sings:

And had he not high honour,
The hillside for a pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in his grave?

But what was that glory compared with the glory that came later? To meet the Son of God amidst the splendours of the Transfiguration; to share that unspeakable privilege with Elijah, the Prophet of Fire, and with Peter and James and John, and to converse with his Lord on the most momentous themes on which human speech can be employed--the Cross, the redemption of the world, and the triumph that lay beyond the tomb.

Nor was this all. For, amidst the dazzling effulgence of that apocalyptic vision with which the Bible closes, I catch still another vision of Moses. I **saw, says the** seer, I *saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire . . . and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*

John heard angels and archangels and all the company of the heavenly host singing of Moses! It is indisputably true that, in a weak and impetuous moment, Moses sinned. It is true that God, feeling grievously affronted by his misconduct, felt it necessary to exercise discipline and severe chastisement. But, true as all this is, it is not the whole of the truth. For what am I to make of

these companion records--the entrancing vision given to Moses from the peaks of Pisgah; the signal honour conferred upon him by his celestial *sepulture*; his appearance amidst the radiant glories of the Transfiguration of his Lord; and the fact that John heard the hosts of heaven singing the song of Moses--the song of Moses and the Lamb? What does this mean?

I shall allow a missionary--and a pioneer missionary at that--to answer that question. Is there a more gallant record, in all the annals of missionary adventure, than the record of James Gilmour of Mongolia? Amidst those Eastern scenes in which he spent so many solitary years, Gilmour found himself puzzling over this problem. How does it come about that Moses, so sternly rebuked and so severely punished for his transgression, was afterwards so conspicuously honoured? 'It just shows', writes Gilmour, 'that God does not *keep things up*!'

There is no other explanation. *He pardoneth iniquity because He deligheteth in mercy.* He loves doing it! How else can you explain the Cross? How else can you account for the everlasting Gospel and for all those sublimities and profundities that Moses discussed with his Lord on the holy Mount? God does not keep things up! We may very well leave it at that, appropriating, as we do so, all the comfort that the thought suggests.

Chapter VI

They Kept it Close!

They kept it close! It is a strange phrase and it occurs in a strange place. For it is part of the glowing record of the Transfiguration. Peter and James and John--the inner circle--had held rapt converse with Moses, the representative of the Law, with Elijah, the representative of the prophets, and with their own glorified Lord. And *they kept it close!*

They kept it close! It is a wartime phrase. They knew when a certain ship was to sail; but they kept it close. They knew the

destination of certain troops about to march; but they kept it close. They knew of certain military plans that were being laid; but they kept it close. *They* kept it *close!*

The words represent, however, not merely a wartime virtue, but an all-time virtue. Nature has always practised it with meticulous assiduity. For ages men gazed upon the stars. What were they? Where were they? But the heavens held their secret. *They* kept it close. And it was not until Copernicus and Galileo and Kepler and Newton and Herschel tore their story from them that astronomy and meteorology began to be.

The waves, too. What are the wild waves saying? Nobody knew. The waves that broke upon the shores of Europe laved vast continents and scattered islands in the West and in the South. But *they kept it close*. And it was not until men like Christopher Columbus and Captain Cook sailed daringly into the sunset that the silence of the centuries was broken.

The rocks and the reefs were equally silent. What happened on this planet before our history books began? This baffling mystery teased the imagination of man until he set to work to dig up the stony records. It was hard and trying work, for the rocks hugged their secret: *they kept it close*.

But, in contradistinction with all this, man is essentially and fundamentally and basically a talker. The destiny of empires may depend upon a talk: in our time princes, presidents, and prime ministers have flown about the world under the most hazardous conditions that they might talk to one another. Talking is often our business; it is sometimes our hobby; it is invariably our relaxation. Talking is frequently our duty and usually our delight. The fact that we speak of the brute creation as dumb animals shows how sharply, in this vital respect, we differentiate between them and ourselves. When we refer to these furry and feathered things in such *terms*, we unconsciously divide creation into two sections -talkers and non-talkers.

Man owes more than he sometimes recognizes to the fact that he is instinctively a talker. In Mikkelsen's account of the months that he and Iversen spent amidst Arctic snows-lost, and lost with very little prospect of ever being found-the gallant Captain says that but for one inestimable source of relief they must have lost their sanity. 'Our only remedy', Mikkelsen says, 'was talk, talk, talk, and plenty of it. Iversen and I discussed continually subjects that would never have interested us under any other conditions.' Being eating animals, they ate; and, being talking animals, they talked. By eating they saved their bodies and by talking they saved their minds.

II

Now, since this facility for conversation is one of man's **master**-prerogatives, it follows that, like all his other prerogatives, it must be kept under severe restraint. There is such a thing as silvery eloquence; but there is also such a thing as dignified reticence.

No man's equipment is complete unless he is furnished with a fair stock of secrets. The man who can air all his knowledge to everybody knows nothing worth imparting to anybody. A man's wealth must be measured, not by what he pays away, but by what he still possesses after all his obligations are discharged. A water supply must be measured, not by the flow at the tap, but by the depth and fullness of the reservoir. And similarly a man's knowledge must be gauged, not by his conversation, but by his reserves. A *wise* man knows more than he ever tells. He may share much of his knowledge with the multitude; he may divide some of his best things among his intimates and companions; he may keep a few of his priceless treasures for the wife of his bosom; but, even then, he will reserve a few choice morsels for himself, and for himself alone. As Robert Burns says in his *Epistle to a Young Friend*:

Aye free, aff **han'** your story tell,
 When **wi'** a bosom crony;
 But still keep something to youtsel
 Ye scarcely tell to ony.

Every man must therefore divide his intellectual store into two divisions--the things about which he talks and the things about which he doesn't. And, of the two, the latter are invariably **the** more important. Silence has its eloquence as well as speech.

If you see a tall fellow ahead of a crowd,
A leader of men marching fearless and proud,
And you know of a tale whose mere telling aloud
Would *cause* that fine head to be instantly bowed
It's a jolly good thing to forget **it!**

If **you** know of a skeleton hidden away
In a cupboard, close guarded, and kept from the day,
A dark, horrid secret, whose sudden display
Would cause shame and heartbreak and lifelong dismay,
It's a pretty good thing to forget **it!**

Every man is entitled to his doubts. How, if he be transparently **honest**, can he escape an occasional gust of uncertainty. But, so long as they are merely doubts, let him keep them to himself. There is all the difference in the world between an undemonstrable positive and a demonstrable negative. If his undemonstrable positive develops into a demonstrable negative, it may become his duty to proclaim it from the housetops. Until then, however, he will be wise to keep it close.

They kept it close! It is a bad sign when a man becomes prodigal of his secrets. When he feels that he must take everybody into his confidence, and tell everybody everything, he should instantly send for a doctor.

A man is never so poor as when his stock of secrets has run **low**. For the matter of that, it is a bad sign when the public becomes garrulous and talks about everything. There are some subjects that are too sacred to be exposed to the glare of the footlights. They do not fit the flicker of a film. They are too majestic to be bandied to and fro in the course of a newspaper controversy. Humanity has a few secrets, and when humanity is quite healthy and sane, it does not drag those secrets on to the stage or discuss them in the Press. There is something wrong somewhere when a people is prepared to talk about everything.

'May I see you for a few minutes?' she asked. 'But please do not light up the room!'

'I suppose you've been reading in the papers about the jewel robbery at Constantine Creek,' she hazarded. I confessed that, in common with most people, I had given some attention to the matter.

'Well,' she went on, 'I committed that robbery!'

'You!' I exclaimed in bewilderment; and then added: 'YOU must go straight to the police and tell them!'

'Oh, I couldn't do that,' she replied; 'it would be madness!'

'Well, then,' I answered, 'I shall probably have to do it myself!'

'Oh, you couldn't, you couldn't!' she cried, staring incredulously.

'I trusted you!'

'But why on earth did you come to me and tell me all about it?' I asked.

'Well,' she replied, 'I could bear it no longer. I just had to tell somebody. I have often been to hear you preach, and I felt that I could trust you. And I realize that, unless I tell somebody whom I *can* trust, I shall soon be telling somebody whom I *can't!*'

Let me lay another experience—a very different one—beside this,

I spent yesterday in the city. At midday I entered a popular dining-room and found it crowded. The little waitress who usually attends to my requirements inquired apologetically:

'Would you mind sitting at a table with three other people?'

'Oh, no,' I replied, seeing that I had no chance of securing the privacy to which I have been accustomed, 'I shall be able to enjoy the conversation without having to take part in it!' I did.

Facing me, at this table set for four, was a young airman. On my right and on my left were two daintily-dressed and nicely-spoken young ladies. The girl on my left wore an engagement ring: she was obviously the sweetheart of the airman. The girl on my right wore a wedding ring, and I soon discovered that she was the bride of a young soldier who had vanished in the war. As to

what had become of him, whether he was dead, wounded, or a prisoner, she had no idea. The girl with the engagement ring was leaving, a little later in the day, for Sydney.

'If,' she said to the girl with the wedding ring, 'if you get news whilst I'm away, you'll send me a wire, won't you?'

'Send you a wire!' replied the other with tremulous emotion, 'My dear, if I get news of Ron, I shall send no wire, I shall rush to the nearest post-office and put through a trunk-line call. I shall want to talk, talk, talk!'

Exactly! There are moments, and they are among life's most magnificent moments, at which the soul must become articulate. Perhaps if we felt more deeply concerning the things that pertain to God and the Cross and Eternity, we should speak of them more frequently. I confess that I like one inspired record of flagrant disobedience to a divine command. *Jesus charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.*

The man who has learned exactly when to speak and when to be silent, when to proclaim his experience and when to *keep it close*, has mastered one of the highest arts of the Christian life. There is another story in the New Testament that evokes my admiration. It is the story of the Woman of **Samaria**. After her unforgettable adventure at the well, she went straight to her fellow townsmen to testify to them of her newly-found Saviour. *He told me*, she exclaimed, *all things that ever I did*. That strikes me as a masterpiece of revelation and of reticence. She did not say what those things were. She did not glory in her shame. She revealed all that it was needful to reveal; she concealed all that it was womanly to conceal. And, because of that perfectly-poised admixture of brave revelation and of modest reticence she led her fellow citizens to the Saviour's feet. It may be that our greatest evangelistic triumphs will come to us when we learn to model our articulate and our silent testimony on hers.

*Chapter VII**The Nightingale in Berkeley Square*

LIFE consists of two hemispheres, the internal and the external. It is commonly assumed that if the outer hemisphere is brightly lit, the inner purrs with contentment and felicity. The song that everybody seems to be lilting just now is evidently designed to show that, in reality, it is the other way about. It *is* the outer realm that depends **for** its illumination on the inner. Our happiness depends, not on something in our circumstances but on something in ourselves.

I may be right; I may be wrong,
But I'm perfectly willing to swear
That when you turned and smiled at me
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

'I may be right; I may be wrong!' Was he right or was he wrong? He was both. He was wrong; for there are no nightingales in Berkeley Square. Yet, in a deeper sense, he was right; for when his inmost emotions thrilled with such ecstasy as her smile brought him, the birds were singing everywhere, even in Berkeley Square. It is not the nightingales that bring the smile; it is the smile that brings the nightingales,

I

Now, where have I met something very like this? Why, to be sure! In one of the most rapturous passages that Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ever gave us, the prophet depicts the delirious excitement of the emancipated people when, their long captivity ended, they are free to return to their own land. Cripples, he says, shall forget their infirmity; the darkness of the blind shall be dispelled by their vision of freedom; and the deaf shall seem to hear the joyous songs with which the happy pilgrims set out for home. And when, for a moment, their transports are held in check by

thoughts of the cruel desert ~~that~~ they must cross, he assures them that it shall be to them a place of rushing streams and gushing fountains. And, as for the taunting mirages of which they have heard their fathers speak, the mirage, he declares, *shall become a lake and the thirsty lad springs of water.*

Nightingales singing where no nightingales are! says the song. Refreshing streams where no streams exist! says the prophet.

The mirage shall become a lake, Isaiah sings. The setting of the promise is intensely significant. In going into exile, and in returning, Israel had to cross the desert. But, in going into captivity, the desert was ten thousand times a desert, by reason of three awful facts: (1) Jerusalem was in flames behind them; (2) Babylonian chains and slavery were before them; and (3) an angry and insulted Deity was above them. But, in coming out of exile, the same dreadful desert was no desert at all. It was like a land of lilies, a garden of fruit and flowers. They crossed it with laughter and singing. And for three reasons: (1) Jerusalem, their glorious home, was before them; (2) the days of their captivity were behind them; and (3) a reconciled and pardoning God was above and about them. The unutterable joy of forgiveness lends a new loveliness to every leaf and landscape; it turns pleasure into perfect paradise; it converts dreary deserts of dust into fragrant valleys of roses; and, best of all, it transforms tantalizing mirages into lovely lakes. There parched lips can slake their thirst, and tired feet may bathe.

II

But this golden word about the mirage and the lake is the articulation of a much deeper truth. For, after all, the desert that the people crossed on their return journey was the same desert that they had crossed on being carried into captivity. Why, on this second journey, should all the mirages crystallize into gleaming lakes when, on *their first*, all the lakes had proved to be but taunting mirages?

Yet life is like that. Its joy depends, not on something in our circumstances, but on something in ourselves. This young couple

have started the day under a cloud. Something went wrong at breakfast-time. She let him hurry off to his train without a kiss without even a smile. All through the day, though the weather was perfect and everything goes well, those two unhappy people will find all their lakes turning into mirages; whereas to-morrow, after a happy though tearful making-up, all the mirages will become the loveliest lakes.

Paul Dombey wondered whether the bells that he heard when the funeral was in progress were different bells from those that pealed so blithely for a wedding, or were they the same bells sounding differently in differing circumstances? In all this Paul was probing to the heart of a profound psychological problem. For the fact is that the bells take us as they find us, and set us to music; that is all. Paul Dombey, who died young, half suspected it; and Trotty Veck, of *The Chimes*, who lived to be old, proved it from experience and proved it to the hilt. When things were going badly with Trotty, and the magistrate said that he **and those like** him ought to be 'put down' with the utmost **rigour** of the law, the chimes, when they pealed out suddenly, made the air ring with the refrain: 'Put 'im down! Put 'im down! Facts and figures! Facts and *figures!* Put 'im down! Put 'im down!' 'If,' Dickens -says- 'the chimes said anything, they said this, and they said it until Trotty's brain fairly reeled.'

Later on in the story we have the same chimes, and the same people listening to them. But this time all is going well; Meg and Richard are to be married on the morrow, and Trotty is at the height of his felicity, 'Just then the bells, the old familiar bells of his own dear, constant, steady friends, the chimes, began to ring. When had they ever rung like that before? They chimed out so lustily, so merrily, so happily, so gaily, that he leapt to his feet and broke the spell that bound him.' And, in a few minutes, Trotty and Richard and Meg were dancing with delight to the gay, gleeful music of the bells. When they themselves were sad, the chimes seemed mournful; when they were happy, the chimes seemed blithe.

III

Let me submit the matter to a practical test. I am writing in Australia. Now what kind of a country is Australia? Is it, for example, beautiful or horrible? In his *Links in My Life*, Commander J. W. Gambier dismisses the question as beyond dispute. Australia is an abominable country! In the course of a remarkable life of travel and adventure, the gallant Commander at least twice visited these lands; and, in his book, he tells us what he thinks of us. 'Mature experience,' he says, 'confirms my view that no country is uglier or more uninteresting than Australia. For the most part, it is an unending monotony of barren, undulating land, with trees growing at considerable distances apart, their dull grey bark peeling off and hanging in ribbons over their whitening stems.' Commander Gambier surveys our plains and our forests, our mountains and our valleys, our fauna and our flora; but he sees nothing for commendation anywhere.

As against this, we have a description of Australia by Mr. W. B. Griffin, the American architect who won the coveted prize for the best design for our Federal capital. In Mr. Griffin's eyes, Australia is a land of majesty and loveliness. And, as for the gum-trees of which Commander Gambier writes so severely, Mr. Griffin maintains that the gum is a wonderful tree, a poet's tree, a decorator's tree. No tree, he avers, equals the eucalypt for embellishing a landscape. To Mr. Griffin the entire country is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

Now how are we to account for this amazing discrepancy? It is not difficult. In Australia, everything went wrong with Commander Gambier: he was utterly miserable. In Australia Mr. Griffin found every circumstance favourable. Mr. Griffin lay back in his car and admired country in which Commander Gambier had wandered day and night, hopelessly lost, and at the point of starvation, country in which he was more than once the victim of brigands and bushrangers. Mr. Griffin looked out upon the bush through the eyes of a proud prize-winner; Commander Gambier looked back upon Australia as a land in which he had been

overwhelmed with misfortune and from which he had only just contrived to escape with his life. To the one, a gum-tree was as pretty as a poem; to the other it was as grim as a gallows. To the one, the lakes were all mirages; to the other, the mirages were all lakes.

When Wordsworth was criticized for singing of dancing daffodils, he was forced to confess that daffodils do not dance. *But*, he pleaded, they set something dancing in him, and, in his poem, he had transferred the joyous reaction of his soul from that inner realm *to* the flower to which that exquisite experience was the response.

And this brings us back to our song:

I may be right; I may be wrong:
But I'm perfectly willing to swear
That when you turned and smiled at me
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

Was he right or was he wrong? A naturalist would shake his head very dubiously when told of that nightingale in Berkeley Square. Yet, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the singer was right; for, when love smiles into the eyes of love, there are larks and linnets and nightingales *carolling* from every branch.

When she smiled, nightingales sang where no nightingales were, And, when He smiles, all life's rockiest roads become *leafy* and fragrant lanes, the darkest night becomes bespangled with stars, the wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose, and all the mirages of life crystallize into shimmering and satisfying lakes. *Wherefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God!*

Chapter VIII

An Epic of Concentration

ON the bottom shelf of my library there stands, like a foundation stone, a block of nine enormous volumes. As a matter of fact, they are a foundation stone, for they were the first theological

times that ever came into my possession, and I can never look upon them without a little flutter of emotion.

More than fifty years ago-on Sunday, May 31, 1891, to be precise-the Secretary of the Park Crescent Congregational Church, Clapham, called on me at about ten o'clock in the morning to say that the church was without a minister; that the pulpit supply for ~~that~~ particular morning had failed: would I step into the breach? **How** I contrived to sustain so vast a responsibility at such meagre notice, I cannot imagine, especially as I find that I took for my text the words: *He, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.* To-day I should need weeks of careful preparation before attempting so abtruse a theme. But perhaps my mind had been occupied with the subject during the days preceding that unexpected summons. At any rate, I struggled through the service, and insuperable obstacles to the immediate appointment of a minister presenting themselves, I was subsequently invited to occupy the pulpit for five months.

Those were the first pulpit steps that I ever climbed, and I often think sympathetically of the long-suffering congregation that survived the daring experiment. When the five months came to an end, it was whispered to me that I was to be entertained at a social evening and made the recipient of a presentation. At that appalling function-appalling to me-I was solemnly presented with the nine huge volumes of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*. I remember lugging them home in the rain that night. They have been my companions all through the years. And here they are, faded but intact, to-day.

I

To-day I turn my attention, not so much to Matthew Henry's *Commentary* as to Matthew Henry himself. It is an interesting historical excursion. In the days to which it transports us, St. James's Palace was looked upon as being out in the country, and there were those who wondered if it was quite safe for royalty to reside in a district so secluded,

The palace grounds were adjoined by a glorious old orchard, the

‘Perhaps not,’ replied the ready-witted daughter, ‘but I know where he’s going, and I want to go with him!’ And, throwing her arms round her father’s neck, she soon wheedled him into giving his consent. They were happily married in 1660, the year in which John Bunyan was thrown into Bedford Gaol, and, two years later, on October 18, 1662, whilst blind John Milton was dictating to his impatient daughters the final stanzas of *Paradise Lost*, Matthew Henry was born.

I have devoted some attention to Philip Henry because it was Philip who made a commentator of Matthew. Every day of his busy life, Philip gathered his children about him and read the Bible to them systematically, illumining the passage with striking illustrations and homely comments, Matthew and his sisters often made notes of these terse and aphoristic observations, and many of them became the foundation on which Matthew’s masterpiece was built up. When Matthew’s mother read the commentary, she often smiled knowingly when she came upon some of her husband’s familiar quips and sallies.

II

Still, although Philip blazed the trail, it is no small achievement on the part of Matthew to have written, two hundred and fifty years ago, an enormous commentary on the whole Bible which, usually produced in nine portentous volumes, is still familiar to ministers of all denominations in every part of the world. Indeed, it is still being published, both in Great Britain and in America, for, although it has long since been superseded from a critical and academic point of view, it is treasured-and is always likely to be -for its penetrating insight, its exhilarating freshness and its ingenuity of thought and expression.

One of the most intriguing illustrations of the far-flung influence of Matthew Henry occurs among the records of Abraham Lincoln. At the age of seventeen, Lincoln, then a gawky young backwoodsman, was invited to his sister’s wedding. To the astonishment of the other guests, he offered to sing a *song of his* own composition. No record was kept of the tune, which, perhaps,

is just as well; but the words are obviously a paraphrase of a well-known comment of Matthew Henry's.

Matthew Henry's relatives and friends always thought that the best thing that he ever wrote was his observation concerning the creation of Eve. '*The woman*', says Matthew Henry, '*was made out of a rib taken from the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him; not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him; but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.*'

Now the rough-and-ready verses that Abraham Lincoln sang at his sister's wedding ran like this:

The *woman* was not taken
 From Adam's feet, we see;
 So he must **not** abuse her
 The meaning seems to be.
 The woman was not taken
 From Adam's head, we know;
 To show she must not rule him—
 'Tis evidently so.
 The woman she was taken
 From under Adam's arm;
 So she must be protected
 From injuries and harm.

The quaint verses, as anyone with half an eye can see, are merely Matthew Henry turned into rhyme. But what did Abraham Lincoln at seventeen know of Matthew Henry? Yet one remembers an incident described by Judge Herndon—a thing that happened some years before Abraham Lincoln's birth. A camp-meeting had been in progress for several days, Religious fervour ran at fever heat. Gathered in complete accord, the company awaited with awed intensity the falling of the celestial fire. Suddenly the camp was stirred. Something extraordinary had happened. The kneeling multitude sprang to its feet and broke into shouts which rang through the primeval shades. A young man who had been absorbed in prayer, began leaping, dancing, and shouting. Simultaneously, a young woman sprang forward, her hat falling to the ground, her hair tumbling about her shoulders

in graceful braids, her eyes fixed heavenwards, her lips vocal with strange, unearthly song. Her rapture increased until, grasping the hand of the young man, they blended their voices in ecstatic melody. These two, Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, were married a week later, and became the parents of the great President.

Now, Peter Cartwright and the other camp-meeting preachers would certainly be familiar with Matthew Henry. Perhaps Nancy heard the saying quoted by one of them, and, later, taught it to her son. However that may be, it is interesting to know that, at that formative stage of his epoch-making career, the noblest of the American Presidents was sitting at the feet of our English Puritan.

III

It was in 1687, when England was seething with discontent and insurrection, that Matthew Henry, after having toyed with the idea of becoming a lawyer, followed in his father's footsteps, and, at the age of twenty-five, entered the ministry. He settled at Chester, and remained there until very nearly the end of his days.

The famous commentary grew naturally out of the conditions that obtained in those leisurely days. Matthew Henry's congregation assembled twice every Sunday-at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon. In the morning he preached for an hour on a chapter of the Old Testament, beginning at the first of Genesis and going on in proper sequence. In the afternoon he preached for an hour on a chapter of the New Testament, making his way through these, too, in their natural order.

At his week-night service, held on Thursday evenings, he delivered a series of lectures on *The Questions of the Bible*. He began in October, 1692, with the question addressed to Adam: *Where art thou?* and he concluded the course, which had occupied twenty years, in May, 1712, when he arrived at the question at the end of Revelation: *What city is like unto this great city?* It is easy to see that a ministry modelled on these lines would lend itself naturally to his concentration upon his magnum opus.

I

It was in 1704—seventeen years after his settlement at Chester—that he conceived the general project of his masterpiece. He tells the story in the temper in which Gibbon tells us of the moment at which he first formed the idea of writing the *Decline and Fall*. Here is Matthew Henry's record:

'Nov. 12, 1704. This night, after much searching of heart, and after many prayers concerning it, I began my *Notes on the Old Testament*. It is not likely that I shall live to finish it, or, if I should, that it should be of public service; yet in the strength of God, and I hope with a single eye to His glory, I set about it. I approach the task with fear and trembling, lest I exercise myself in things too high for me.'

He was then forty-two. He lived to complete the *Notes on the Old Testament* and was well into the New when, on June 22, 1714, death overtook him. He aimed at completing a volume every two years. In its original form the enormous work consisted of six volumes. His one great desire was that his mother—the young lady who knew her own mind concerning her love affairs in 1660—should live to read at least the earlier volumes. His father had died, at the age of sixty-five, nine years after Matthew had settled at Chester and before the commentary was thought of. His mother read the first volume, and probably saw the manuscript of the second. She died in 1707, having endeared herself to all who knew her by a life of singular strength, sweetness, and grace. Seven years later, at the age of fifty-two, her illustrious son's strength began to fail. On April 17, 1714, he writes: 'Finished to-day the fifth volume, bringing my work down to the Book of Acts.'

In 1712, after twenty-five years at Chester, he had accepted a call to Hackney in London. In taking farewell of his Chester congregation, however, he had promised that he would come back to preach to them at least once a year. He kept his pledge in 1713 and again in 1714; but, on his return journey after this second visit, his horse threw him; and, although he denied that he had sustained any injury, he was never the same again. He died a month or so later.

'You have been used,' he said to a friend who sat beside his bed, 'you have been used to take notice of the sayings of dying men: **this** is mine: that a life spent in the service of God is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in this world!' With which provocative and characteristic comment we may very well take leave of him.

Chapter IX

Westward Ho!

CHRISTMAS is coming! The young people in the other room are grouped about the piano and it *is* pleasant to hear them singing:

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to *Thee!*

Whenever we turn afresh to this lovely story—as, at Christmas-time, we invariably ~~do—we~~ are impressed afresh by the tremendous strategical importance of the record of the Wise Men. It represents the entry of the Gentiles into the luminous drama of the New Testament. As I turn the pages of my Old Testament, I am impressed by the fact that it takes small cognizance of nationality. Countries are scarcely mentioned. The world is sharply divided into two sections—Jews and Gentiles. The Jew, of whatever nationality, was inside the pale: the Gentile, of whatever race, was outside. Every man living, of whatever tribe or speech, fell under one or other of these two classifications. With this in mind, it is interesting to glance afresh at the two groups that occupy the foreground of the Christmas idyll, The shepherds who kept their flocks by night were Jews; the Wise Men who followed the star were Gentiles. Their caravans, so different in character, converge

upon Bethlehem that **all the** world *may* see that there is *neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus.* He is the cosmopolitan Saviour.

Palestine was the one country to which anybody might come from anywhere without causing astonishment or suspicion. See how easily and naturally, at the outset of the Saviour's pilgrimage, these Oriental astrologers mingle with the life of the land! See how, in the last days of that pilgrimage, the Greeks came from the West to see Him, their presence in Palestine seeming equally congruous and fitting! And see how Palestine provided Paul with a base from which he could operate, with equal facility, upon either Europe or Asia!

I

This story of the Wise Men of the East is placed on record to show that every *sky has its star*. A man may live in the most outlandish spot in the solar system. But if his heart is hungry, and his eyes wide open, he will discover some pin-prick of light in the dark vault of his heaven that, faithfully followed, will lead him to Jesus. These men kept their vigil in a place so remote, and so out of touch with the rest of the world, that Marco Polo, in spite of the most painstaking researches and inquiries, had the greatest possible difficulty in locating it. Yet, in response to their aching desire for something that, sensed by their spirits, their science failed to reveal, a star swam into their ken that led them to Bethlehem.

Nor had they to seek some unfamiliar environment. They went, as was their wont, to their observatories, and, as they pursued their accustomed studies, the star appeared. It is wonderful how often God reveals Himself to men through their ordinary tasks and avocations. The shepherds watch their flocks by night, and, lo, the angels fill their sky! The fishermen cast their nets, and One moves towards them who bids them become fishers of men! A woman goes to a well to draw water, and, as she stands there with her waterpot, a Stranger offers her the water that will dispel all thirst for ever!

So true is it that every sky has its star. A man has not to seek another land or another life in order to discover God. Let him stand just where he is, and scan his ordinary sky with eyes wide open, and, there, blazing brightly above him, he will discern the star that will lead him into the light everlasting.

II

This story of the Wise Men of the East is placed on record to show that every *vision has its price*. For the stat insisted on going the wrong way! It went West! To an Eastern mind that was anathema. What good could come out of the West? An Eastern looked to the East as the source of all intellectual and spiritual illumination.

To make matters worse, in leading them on a westward course, it directed them, of all places, to Palestine! Palestine was the home of everything that was conservative, everything that was antiquated, everything that was behind the times, It had no observatories, no academies, no universities, no anything!

After crossing the sandy desert; after having found a way across the turgid and tumultuous waters of the Euphrates; after having forded the fast-rushing streams of the Tigris; after having followed the star among the oaks of *Bashan* and the cedars of Lebanon; after having seen for the first time the heights of *Carmel* and of Hermon; after having caught sight of the glories of Jerusalem and gazed upon the stately proportions of the Temple, they at length found themselves in the yard of an inn. The object of their search had been born in a manger! Yet they never faltered. The star led and they followed. They were prepared to pay any price for truth. They would allow nothing to intervene between themselves and the goal to which the star was leading.

There lies the charm of the story. In loyal fidelity to the noblest traditions of scientific research, these men set out in search of truth, asking no questions as to the destination to which their passionate quest would lead them. With honest and open minds, they were ready to face any facts and to stride along any trail. If

only some spark of illumination would somewhere appear, they **were** prepared **to** follow **the gleam in scorn of consequence**. No ancient beliefs or preconceived ideas should blur their vision or frustrate their search. In his *Seventy Years of Archaeology*, Sir Flinders Petrie tells of a man who was caught filing away at one of the stones in the interior of the Great Pyramid. Challenged as to his iconoclastic behaviour, he explained that, during years of patient study, he had formulated an elaborate theory as to the prophetic and historical significance of the Pyramids. The measurements of this one recalcitrant stone, however, were quite irreconcilable with the splendid scheme. He was therefore altering the Pyramid to make it square with the theory! It was in no such spirit that the Magi turned the faces of their camels westward. Whatever truth was; wherever truth was; they were prepared to part with all the gems that they had accumulated in order to purchase that one Pearl of Great Price.

Theirs is the only reasonable attitude. If religion be worth while, it must command and must insist on my obedience. I do not want a little religion that I can hold in my hand like a toy or a tool; I do not want a religion that I can pick up when I please and put down when I feel in the humour to drop it; I do not want a religion that I can assume on Sunday and relegate to obscurity on Monday. I do not want a religion that makes me feel that *I* am the big thing whilst **it** is the small thing. I want a religion that is big enough to command me; big enough to lord it over me; big enough to defy my prejudices; big enough to insist on my going West when all my instincts and inclinations are urging me **to go East**! I want a religion that will say: This way and no other! This thing and no other! This faith and no other! Even though it command me to worship a babe in a manger at a wayside inn, I prefer a religion that is sovereign and majestic to a religion that is trivial and subservient. I want to be led to a Rock that is higher than I. Anything smaller **will**, sooner or later, become **contemptible** to me.

III

This story of the Wise Men of the East is placed on record to **show that** every *fidelity has its reward*. Those to whom the star appears may, from that hour, live lives that are divinely guided and controlled. Heaven has its beckoning and its frightening angels. The beckoning angels bade the Wise Men follow the star. The **frightening** angels bade them, later on, ignore the instructions of **Herod** and return to their own country another way.

God has many messengers yet but one message. Whether He sends angels, as in the case of the shepherds, or stars, as in the case of the Wise Men, He is seeking, both by shining spirits and by celestial orbs, to lead the wayward hearts of men to the feet of His divine Son. It may be that, if only we had eyes to see and ears to hear, we should discover that every star that shines, and every bird that sings, and every flower that blooms is calling us to the worship and service of Jesus.

I like to conjure up the scene that must have presented itself at Bethlehem on the arrival of these pilgrims. Does it sometimes happen that, when an heir *is* born to a great English estate, the nurse takes the baby *across to* the window and bids him look out? 'It's all yours!' she tells him. 'It's all yours! The fields and the farms, the wood, and the lakes, the hills and the valleys, the sheep and the cattle—they are all yours! You're the heir to them **all!**' So the infant Jesus looked into these furrowed Eastern faces, '*I will give thee*', it had been written, '*the heathen for **thine** inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*' And here they were; here *was* the *inheritance submitting* itself to the inspection of the Heir! '*The Gentiles*,' it had been written, '*the Gentiles shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising!*' And here, surely enough, they were! The inheritance was greeting the Heir; the kings were bowing to the King of kings, It was a foretaste of the day when all science shall bow before His throne and when all kings shall cast their crowns before Him.

Chapter X

The Swallows on the Telegraph Wire

As a small boy I was taken by my parents to a tiny fishing village on the Sussex coast, a village that has since developed into a populous and fashionable tourist resort. In the course of that delightful holiday I beheld a spectacle that will haunt my fancy to my dying day. As soon as we had arranged our goods and chattels at the little inn, we strolled down to the front to feast our eyes upon the sea. But it was not the sea that engrossed our attention, the telegraph-wires that ran along the foreshore were black with swallows. The birds were obviously excited. Hundreds of them would fly away and return a little later, as if exercising their wings. The next day the wires were even more crowded and the agitation still more marked. And then, without any sound or signal, off they flew, and, in a dense black cloud, vanished over the watery horizon!

We have all fallen in love with Kingsley's old gamekeeper at Allfowlsness. 'He was as good an old Scotsman as ever knit stockings on a winter's night. He lived alone upon the Ness, in a turf hut thatched with heather and fringed around with great stones slung across the roof by bent ropes, lest the winter gales should blow the hut right away. He minded but two things in all the world, the birds and the Bible!' When the autumn winds began to blow, and the swallows plumed their wings for flight, the old man, leaning heavily upon his stick, would toddle out upon the moor, doff his cap to them as they departed, wishing them a merry journey and a safe return. Then he gathered up some of the feathers they had left, and went back to read and knit by his winter fire, and to wait patiently for the return of his feathered companions.

I

This is all extremely fascinating; and it is so fascinating because it suggests so much more than it actually reveals. For why does

And what of the greatest of all our migratory instincts--the instinct of immortality? For, after all, immortality is an instinct and not an argument. A few may think that they can prove it. But there are millions who, unable to prove it, nevertheless@ it. Look *at* the inscriptions on the monuments of antiquity, to be seen at such places as the British Museum. Here are grotesque representations, thousands of years old, of the soul, in the form of a bird, departing from the prostrate body; of the heart being weighed at the judgement of Osiris; and of many similar scenes depicting the fates and fortunes of men and women in the after-life. Why did the Arab bury the horse with his master? Why did the African bury the slaves with their chief? Why did the South Sea Islander bury a bevy of wives with their king? Why did the Maori bury some weapons with the warrior? Nothing can be more intensely impressive than the unanimity with which earnest men in all ages have sensed a life beyond the grave. Whether you turn to the manuscript of the learned sage or to the customs of the most savage barbarian, you are driven to the conclusion that when Almighty God, amidst the glistening dews of creation's early morning, stooped over Adam's prostrate clay and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He at the same time whispered to the conscious instincts of man's unsullied spirit a radiant promise of immortality.

II

There is, of course, nothing original in all this. Plato argued in the *selfsame* way more than twenty centuries ago, and Addison, across the ages, answered him:

It must be so! Plato, thou reasonest well;
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to *man*!

The instinct, like the instinct of the swallow, is *agelong* and universal. It attends us all through life and grows upon us towards

the close. We feel that we are greater than the universe; the eternal harmonies are for ever echoing through our souls; however lovely life may be, we feel that there is more, immensely more, to follow. And, when friend after friend departs and human frailties multiply, expectation becomes wonderfully wistful and the dread of death is swallowed up in the hope of life eternal.

In his *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine has a memorable passage in which he describes Vergniaud and his followers, at the end of their pitiful sufferings, waiting for the hour of execution. Vergniaud cheers his companions by reminding them of the evidence of immortality. And then he concludes by asking: 'Are not we ourselves the best evidence of it—we who sit here confronting imminent death, yet calm, serene, impassive? What is it that gives us this power but the immortal spirit within?' On the other side of the Atlantic, Emerson tells of two American senators who each in his own way spent twenty-five years in searching for evidence of the immortality of the soul. And Emerson marvels that they failed to notice that the impulse that prompted them to seek that evidence so patiently through all the years was in itself the strongest proof they could desire. I like to watch the swallow turn its face to the ocean, and set fearlessly out over the waters. If I had no other proof of lands beyond the sea, the instinct of the swallow would satisfy me. 'Sir,' says Emerson grandly, 'I hold that God, who keeps faith with the migratory instincts of the swallows, will keep His word with man!' It was well and bravely spoken.

It is this migratory instinct in the soul that convinces Hamlet of the futility of suicide:

the dread of something after death
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns--puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.

Even children feel the force of it. That is Wordsworth's idea in *We Are Seven*. She was a little girl of eight.

'Sisters and brothers, **little** maid,
 How many may you be?'
 'How many? Seven in **all**,' she said,
 And wondering looked at me.

'And where are they? I pray you tell,'
 She answered, 'Seven are we;
 And two of us at Conway dwell,
 And two are gone to sea.

'Two of us in the churchyard lie,
 My sister and my brother;
 And, in the churchyard cottage, I
 Dwell near them with my mother.'

It appeared to her questioner that there was matter here for subtraction, but the curly-headed little maiden would not hear of it.

'How many are you then,' said I,
 'If they two are in heaven?'
 The little maiden did reply,
 'O master! we are seven.'

'But they are dead; those two are dead!
 Their spirits are in **heaven**!'
 'Twas throwing words away; for still
 The little maid would have her will,
 And said, 'Nay, we are **seven**!'

Who has not pitied poor Mark Twain in his frantic search for evidence of a hereafter? He ransacked **all** the libraries for books, and more books, and still more books. He read everything that had ever been written on the subject. Then, tired out, he laid down the last volume, exclaiming sadly to the woman who was looking after him: 'No, **I** don't believe it! I can't believe it!'

'Mr. Clemens,' the good woman replied, 'you *do* believe it! You wouldn't have read **all** those books unless you did!' A subtle and profound philosophy lay *there*.

III

And what does all this amount to? What practical end does this instinct serve?

It throws a flood of light upon life, ordinary everyday life, and upon our relationships with one another. The memory that stirred the conscience of Augustine St. Clare, and made him feel, in spite of all his behaviour, that slavery was wrong, **was** the thought of his mother leading him out into the **starlit** night and saying: 'See, Auguste, the poorest, meanest slave on our plantation will still be living when all those stars have **sputtered out**. They will live as long as God lives!' The stars temporal: the slaves eternal! Then, if both he and his slaves were citizens of eternity, how could he buy and sell them like cattle; how could he torture and terrorize them? And, by the same token, how can I deceive or cheat or debase my fellowman if both he and I are pilgrims through the ages, destined to confront each other again in the land where all earth's wrongs are righted?

And see what light it throws upon the Cross! The New Testament declares that Jesus brought immortality to light through the Gospel. But there is a sense in which immortality brought Him to light through the Gospel. Is it conceivable that God would have given His well-beloved Son to save-in some attenuated and poverty-stricken sense-men whose lives are bounded by the cradle and the grave? It is because we ourselves are a bunch of **everlastings** that we need the everlasting light and the everlasting life and the everlasting love that the everlasting Gospel offers.

In the days when every court and castle had its jester, a certain Duke possessed a clown named Wamba to whom he was much attached. To mark his appreciation, he bade him take the Grand Tour. 'Go abroad,' he said, 'see all that there is to be seen; take with you this golden wand; and, if you meet a greater fool than yourself, present him with it!' On his return, Wamba found the Duke desperately ill. 'I, too, am going a long journey,' he told the jester, 'an even longer journey than yours!' 'And *is* everything ready?' asked Wamba; 'are all the preparations made?' 'Alas!

Wamba,' answered the Duke, 'nothing is ready! I have made no preparations!' 'Then, surely,' replied Wamba, 'it is to you that I must give the golden wand!'

The swallow-instinct in our souls tells us of the life that stretches endlessly before us, and Jesus came into the world that, by His redeeming and transfiguring grace, we may make that endless life sublime.

Part Three

Chapter I

Shibboleth

IS there, even in the Old Testament, a lovelier picture than that moving scene in which Joseph brings his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to his father's bedside to receive the old man's dying benediction. Laying one withered and trembling hand upon the head of Ephraim and the other upon the head of Manasseh, the departing patriarch exclaimed: *'The Angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads! And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac! And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth!'*

They did, They each became a multitude. And, five or six centuries later, war broke out—civil war—between the descendants of these two boys. In the interval they had lived apart. And, as is invariably the case with peoples of the same blood who occupy separate territories and have few communications with each other, they developed distinctive dialects.

The same thing happened in our own history. Our people were scattered over the British Isles. Means of communication, and even of correspondence, were few. As a consequence, the English came to speak the language in one way, the Scots in another, the Irish in another, and the Welsh in yet another.

Ian Maclaren tells how, when John Carmichael settled as minister at Drumtochty, he brought with him a housekeeper of whose origin the folk of the glen were very suspicious. Was she English or was she Scots? It was difficult to say. She spoke like a Scots-woman who had lived many years in England, but then again she might easily be an English-woman who had spent many years in Scotland. Mrs. Macfadyen called at the manse in an

endeavour to solve the problem, but she was unable to furnish the glen with a satisfactory report.

'I watched for a word that would tell her tongue,' explained this good lady, but no conclusive word was uttered. Mrs. Macfadyen thought the word 'church' would settle it; but it failed.

'She didna say "**chich**", so she's not English-born: an' she didna say "**churrch**", so she's been oot o' Scotland.'

'*Wurk* would be a gude handy test,' suggested Jamie Soutar; and Mrs. Macfadyen agreed; but she had been unable to coax the minister's lady into attempting it. As everybody knows, an Englishman puts an 'r' into 'work' as a cook puts a quince into an apple pie, but a Scotsman puts so many 'r's' into it that it resembles an apple pie that is all quinces.

Exactly thus was it with the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh. Among the peculiarities of speech that they had developed in the course of their centuries of separation was the loss, by the Ephraimites, of their ability to pronounce the 'sh' sound. In the course of *the* civil war, a host of Ephraimites was trapped. **To** escape, they would have to *cross* a certain stream. In crossing the stream they would naturally pretend that they belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. How could such a deception be prevented? **To** each man, as he approached, the guards said, 'Say *Shibboleth!*' But the unfortunate Ephraimites could only say '*Sibboleth!*' And there fell that day forty and two thousand men.

I

The 'point is, of course, that, like the distinction between Shibboleth and Sibboleth, a thing may be very small in itself; but it may be indicative of something really tremendous.

On the night of September 10, 1759, a watcher on the banks of the St. Lawrence might have seen a tall young man in military uniform tossing straws into the river and watching their movements as they drifted to and fro. Surely an absurd occupation for a grown man, and a high officer at that! But James Wolfe is preparing for the attack *that*, within a few hours, he proposes to make

upon the Heights of Abraham! Upon his exact knowledge of the tides may depend his capture of Quebec, his addition of Canada to the British Empire, and his establishment of our authority in the Western Hemisphere.

Or let us exchange the mighty St. Lawrence for a very different stream. And here we are at Ettrick-Sir Walter Scott's Ettrick, James Hogg's Ettrick, William Wordsworth's Ettrick, Thomas Boston's Ettrick. Lockhart tells us that Sir Walter Scott was one day strolling along the heather-clad banks of a stream in the Ettrick Valley when he came upon Mungo Park standing on a rock at the water's edge, tossing pebbles into a deep pool and intently watching the bubbles as they rose to the surface.

'This appears to be an idle amusement for a man like you!' observed Sir Walter.

'Not so idle as you think!' retorted Mungo Park.

And he explained that it was by these experiments with the pebbles and the bubbles that he learned to ascertain the depth of a river. And many a time, in the course of his historic expeditions in Africa, that knowledge was a matter of life and death to him. Mungo Park opened up that romantic era of African exploration that subsequently led to the adventures of Speke and Grant and Burton and Stanley and Livingstone. But he might easily have perished almost as soon as he landed in the dark continent, but for the secrets that the pebbles and the bubbles had whispered to him.

Or take another incident. I was in London in 1888, when the Parnell Commission became the centre of world-wide excitement. Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Secretary of State for Ireland, and Mr. Burke, the Under-Secretary, had been murdered by Fenians in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The London Times charged Mr. Parnell,

leader of *the* Irish Party in the House of Commons, with complicity in the crime; and, to prove it, published a photograph of a letter in Mr. Parnell's handwriting condoning and approving the murders. Mr. Parnell at once declared that the letter was a forgery, and the Parnell Commission-one of the longest and most sensational legal cases of all time-was set up. It ended dramatically.

The Times had bought the letter from a man named Pigott for

on which the scholarly Philip Melanchthon sought his burly friend Martin Luther and pointed out to him that the Greek word that had always been translated *penance* really meant repentance, *a change of heart*. Judas performed *penance* when he went out and hanged himself; Peter exhibited *penitence* when he went out and wept bitterly.

Reformation! Regeneration! They look very much alike, But are they? Reformation is a change of clothes, an outward transformation. Regeneration is a new birth, the remaking of the entire man.

Reformation is a veneer. *Regeneration* is the most sublime, the most mysterious, the most majestically miraculous operation that our little world ever witnesses. It is altogether mystical and altogether incomprehensible. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit.* A conversion is the evidence of the mighty ministry of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in the theatre of the human soul. A conversion represents the enactment of the first chapter of Genesis all over again, In every conversion the heavens and the earth are created afresh. The soul is without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep. Then the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters. And God says: Let there be light! And there is light. Out of chaos there comes order; out of a repulsive shapelessness there arise forms of grace and comeliness and beauty; out of deadness and insensibility, life and emotion spring into rapturous being.

Shibboleth! Sibboleth! Right! Might! Penance! Penitence! Reformation! Regeneration! In each case it is only a difference of a letter or two. Yet what eternities and infinities occupy that chasm! It reminds me of a story that, in his monumental *Analecta*, Wodrow tells concerning a devout and fervent little minister who, once a year, visited a distant parish to assist the local minister at his great annual Communion. On the road he was accustomed to alight from his grey pony at a little wayside inn that nestled in a lonely hollow out among the rugged and heather-covered hills. When he drew rein for the first time at this cosy little hostelry, the daughter of the house tripped out and took charge of his beast.

He at once became interested in her. She was a typical Scottish lassie—a bonnie girl with chestnut hair and rosy cheeks and laughing eyes, who did everything in her power to make his visits restful and pleasant. Eager to make the most of his opportunity, the good man engaged the girl in conversation and soon came to close grips on the themes that were nearest his own heart. Unable to lead her to a definite decision, he extracted from her a promise that, until they met again, she would daily offer a prayer that he should teach her. He then instructed her to kneel every night, presenting earnestly the request: ‘O *Lord, show me myself!*’ On his return a year later he was astonished at the change in her. All the sparkle and the gaiety had vanished: the brightness had left her eyes: a fixed gloom seemed to have settled upon her spirit.

On entering anew into conversation, she could talk of nothing but her wickedness, her waywardness, her faithlessness, and her need. He again tried to persuade her to throw herself upon the Saviour’s mercy; but she could not believe that love so *amazing*, so divine could be intended for the likes of her. She again promised, however, to offer daily any prayer that he prescribed. He thereupon taught her a petition that differed by only a syllable from the former one. ‘O *Lord, show me Thyself.*’ And when, the following year, he returned to the inn, he saw in her face, not the roguish and frivolous exuberance of the old days, nor the leaden looks of a year before, but an expression of settled peace and *overflowing* gratitude. Her first glance told the *whole* story. The *first* prayer had brought her to herself: the second had led her to the Saviour.

Chapter 11

His Ain Folk

I

WE all like to be recognized and greeted and welcomed. It is this essentially human characteristic of ours that lends such infinite pathos to the opening and closing passages of the Fourth

Gospel. '*He came unto His own and His own received Him not*'; or, as the Scottish version has it, apparently with Dr. Moffatt's entire concurrence, '*He cam' unto His ain folk, and His ain folk di dna ken Him*'. So the Gospel opens, And the close? It is the same story over again. '*When the morning was come, stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*' Once again, *He cam' unto His ain folk, and His ain folk didna ken Him!*

It is the supreme tragedy of the New Testament record. Jesus, the Messiah, came to the Jews, who had been carefully prepared by patriarchs and prophets and priests for His coming, yet, notwithstanding the explicit instructions and vivid descriptions that they had received, they failed to recognize Him. And, failing to recognize Him, they scouted His claims, rejected His overtures, and finished up by crucifying Him. He turned to the Gentiles and, at their alien hands, received the welcome that His ain folk denied Him.

Somehow, the record reminds me of two stories, one from ancient and one from modern literature. Ulysses was summoned to the wars, and all the world knows of his adventures in Asia, Africa, and Europe during the twenty years that followed. At length, bent and broken and nearly blind, he returned, disguised as a beggar, to *Ithica*. Nobody recognized him: even his devoted shepherd, *Eumæus*, found it difficult to believe that this was indeed his old master. But Argos, his faithful hound, despite his decrepitude and the decay of all his powers, pricked up his ears at the approach of Ulysses, wagged his tail furiously, and, his warm heart collapsing under the strain of so much excitement, he lowered his head upon his outstretched paws and died.

The other story is from Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*. When Henry Morton returned to Milnwood, the old laird, Colonel Morton, was dead, and, indeed, none of those who had once known him seemed still to *survive*. He was assured, however, that *Allie Wilson*, the cross-grained and sharp-tongued old house-keeper, still lived and was *actually* mistress of Milnwood. He decided to call, and, on doing so, met with the kind of reception that his knowledge of the *well-meaning* but ill-tempered old

virago had led him to expect. She did not of course, recognize him, but when she learned that her visitor had travelled in foreign parts, she drew him in, hoping against hope that he would have some news of the young laird whom she had for so many years lamented.

Letting her tongue run garrulously on, she described to Henry the death of the Colonel; and then:

'While she was thus detailing the last moments of the old miser, Henry was pressingly engaged in diverting the assiduous curiosity of the dog, which, after much snuffing and examination, began capering and jumping upon him. At length, in the urgency of his impatience, Henry could not forbear exclaiming, in a tone of angry command, "Down, Elphin, down, sir!"

"*Ye ken oor dog's name,*" exclaimed the old lady in amazement, "*ye ken oor dog's name, and it's no a common ane! And the creature kens ye, too! . . . God guide us! . . . It's my ain bairn!*" So saying, the poor old woman threw herself around Henry's neck, clung to him, kissed him as if he had been actually her child, and wept for very joy!

Why has my mind turned to these two stories concerning dogs? Perhaps because that was precisely the epithet that the Jews were never tired of hurling at the Gentiles. They were dogs, *loathsome* pariahs, unclean curs that prowled around the city walls. And, in the fullness of time, Jesus came, not to the dogs, but to His *ain* folk. *He came unto His own and His own received Him not;* but the dogs-the Gentile dogs-crouched submissively and obediently at His feet.

I never read this pathetic record on the threshold of John's Gospel without recalling a poignant memory of my own boyhood. My parents had gone for a holiday in Wales, and I had been sent to stay with some friends, who occupied a *large* house not far from home, Boy-like, I loved to poke about the place, wandering into the different rooms and seeing all that there was to be seen. But there was one room that I was forbidden to enter: its door was always closed. Nobody ever entered that room but my *hostess*. As a natural consequence, that room *piqued* my curiosity. I used

to visit the room facing it and gaze wonderingly at that closed door. One day, as I was perched at the foot of a couch in that opposite room, the mysterious door softly opened and the mother of the household came out. She caught sight of me. I did not know, of course, that she had just left the bedside of a boy of exactly my own age who was terribly, terribly afflicted. But I suppose that the sudden vision of another boy, just the age of her own, and possessed of all his faculties, was too much for her. The contrast broke her down. She rushed across to the couch against which I was leaning, and, throwing herself full length upon it, wept as though her heart would break.

'Oh, Sonny,' she moaned, in an *agony* of grief. 'Sonny, Sonny, Sonny! I've fed you and nursed you and cared for you and loved you all these years, and you've never even known me!'

Never, in all those years, one look of recognition, never a smile, never a word, never an understanding touch or hand-clasp or caress. That was the heartbreak!

It was His heartbreak. The people whom He had led by cloud and by flame: the people whom He had fed with manna out of the skies and satisfied with water out of the rock; the people to whom He had foretold His coming by dream, by oracle and seer--He *cam'* unto His *ain folk*, and His *ain folk* *didna ken him!*

II

How are we to explain all this? By what means was this stupendous tragedy precipitated? Why did the Jews, so carefully instructed and prepared, fail to recognize their King? The answer is that they were the victims of four terrifying tyrannies.

The *first* was the tyranny of Caution. They were right in being cautious. Caution is a Jewish characteristic and, on the whole, a Jewish virtue. But caution can be carried to excess. The business man who allows caution to strangle enterprise fails lamentably. Nothing venture, nothing win. The army that remains within its trenches is lost. When the Son of God, fulfilling to the letter the prognostications of the prophets, had presented His credentials and

performed His miracles, they should have thrown caution to the winds, and, by a magnificent enterprise of faith, should have acclaimed and crowned Him.

The *second* was the tyranny of *Orthodoxy*. In his *Life of Jesus Christ*, Dr. Stalker shows that, at the time of the advent of Jesus, the Jewish nation had attained a degree of orthodoxy absolutely unprecedented in its history. For the first time it was entirely free of idolatry. The priestly orders and offices were universally recognized and honoured; the temple services and annual feasts were observed with the strictest regularity. But, in the process, faith had become stereotyped. It left no room for that new light which, as Oliver Cromwell used to say, is always breaking from the Word of God. Their very fidelity to encrusted tradition disqualified them for the reception of fresh revelations. The dead Past held their religious instincts in an icy grip. And, thus enslaved with golden chains, they failed to welcome their Lord.

The *third* was the tyranny of Language. They were masters of the letter, yet strangers to the spirit, of the prophecies. Robert Louis Stevenson used to tell of a beggar who often sought his company. This man could recite by the hour the noblest passages in English poetry; but he could not discuss it; his mind seemed a blank as to the poet's meaning and message. He was charmed by the music and the rhythm and the cadence; he had no eyes for anything beneath the surface.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson tells of a student of his acquaintance who had an extraordinary genius for acquiring book-knowledge. Applying himself to botany, he could, whenever he heard of a rare flower that he had never seen, reel off a most accurate and exhaustive description of it; yet, if the actual flower were presented to him, he could never identify it.

That was the spiritual tragedy of the Jewish nation. The people mastered the prophets as Stevenson's beggar mastered the poets: they learned of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley as Dr. Watkinson's student learned of his botanical specimens. But it was all a matter of words, words, words; language, language, language! As Jesus Himself told them, *Ye search the Scriptures,*

thinking that in them you have eternal life; but they merely testify of Me; and ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life. The glass can never cool dry lips: it is the water in the glass. The plate can never satisfy the hunger of a ravenous man: it is the food upon the plate. The Scriptures can never save the soul: it is the Saviour revealed in the Scriptures. That was the truth to which Jewish eyes were blind.

The *fourth* was the tyranny of *Detail*. That was what Jesus meant when, in words of scathing and terrible condemnation, He cried: *Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone.*

I remember, many years ago, strolling among the tulip beds in Rosherville Gardens, Gravesend. I thought the flowers wonderful and admired first this blossom and then that one. The whole struck me as a dazzling riot of gorgeous colour. Passing on, I climbed to the top of a cliff, from which, although I could no longer make out the individual flowers, I could survey the general design of the lawn. And, to my astonishment, I discovered that the tulips, in their various hues, made up an elaborate pattern, amidst which the words **GOD SAVE THE KING** flamed in letters of vivid scarlet across the entire bed.

When I was down among the flowers, I failed to notice this patriotic slogan. Like the Jews in their interpretation of the Scriptures, I was tyrannized by detail. I had to withdraw to a distance in order to decipher the general scheme woven into the pattern. The Jews were so close to the ritual of the Temple, so close to the passionate outpourings of the prophets, so close to the human personality of that pale Carpenter of Nazareth, that, seeing each fragment clearly, they missed the meaning of the whole. It is an oft-recurring disaster, I sometimes think that the dwellers in manses and parsonages and rectories are so near to sacred things that they are in danger of *seeing only* the things themselves and of forfeiting the vision of the spiritual realities behind those things. They admire the blossoms but miss the motto that *blazes* across the bed, It is so easy to be tyrannized by detail.

III

He came unto His own folk and they failed to recognize Him. It is the most ancient of tragedies: it is the most modern of tragedies. How can I right this cruel wrong? How can I open the eyes of those who are blind to His regal claims upon them?

In the early days of American history a drama was enacted that should never be forgotten. The animosity between the red men and the white men had reached such a pitch that no home was secure. The Indians struck down the trader in the wood and scalped without mercy the traveller on the trail. They prowled round the cabins of the husbandman on the frontier; their tomahawks were aimed alike at the labourer in the field and the child in the cradle. It was resolved to form a great yeoman army to sweep the forests, bring the redskins to their knees, and compel them to restore the hundreds of children whom they had stolen. Even the Quakers of Pennsylvania sent a strong contingent. The campaign ended in scenes which Bancroft describes as the loveliest ever witnessed in the western world. Beneath a bower erected on the green river bank, the great chiefs and warriors of the Senecas, the Delawares, and the Shawnees sued for peace and surrendered their captives. The reunion of the parents and children was indescribable in its intensity of emotion.

But, in the end, a situation emerged that taxed the ingenuity of the cleverest. For there remained parents whose children had been torn from their arms many years earlier and who, after so long an interval, were unable to identify their offspring. And there remained stalwart youths and lovely maidens who could not recognize their fathers and mothers. What was to be done? In this crisis, some genius suggested that each mother in turn should move among the unclaimed captives, singing softly the songs and lullabies with which she was wont to soothe her babes to sleep in the days of Auld lang syne. And, surely enough, as each woman moved through the listening throng, crooning those sweet melodies, some tall stripling or comely maiden would spring towards her, crying, 'Mother! Mother!' and rush into her arms,

Is it not conceivable that if, in **the** ears of men who have never yet recognized the *Saviour*, we pour afresh the deathless words that, in earlier days, they associated with the thought of Him--His *God* so loved *the* world or His Verily, *verily* *Z say unto you*, or His *Come unto Me* and *Z will give you* rest--the heavenly music will work its sublime magic and the joyous reunion of the soul and its Saviour will be triumphantly effected?

Chapter III

A Floral Tribute

THERE is one miracle that should captivate the heart of every minister who is seeking an appropriate theme for spring-time. It is the only floral miracle in the Bible. Behold *the rod of Aaron brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds*. Neither the primrose in the English lanes nor the wattle in our Australian bush are as eloquent of the magic of spring as is the almond in the East. It is the first indication of the departure of winter. Its very name means 'to awaken early'. Moses laid in the Tabernacle a barren wintry rod. In the morning it flamed with the beauty of spring, with the glory of summer and with the rich fruition of autumn.

The selection of almond blossoms at the consecration of Aaron hinted at a renaissance, a revival, a new and better age. It was a floral tribute, offered by divine hands, to the inner significance and perennial value, not only of the Aaronic priesthood, but of the Christian ministry of all time. For whilst it suggests that the minister is nothing, and less than nothing, except so far as through him, as through Aaron's dry rod, the divine grace and power are poured, it also suggests that there is that in the minister, as in Aaron's almond rod, which, divinely awakened and energized, will bring new life and new beauty to an arid and dying world.

The very fact that a miracle was deemed necessary sets a seal of historic importance upon the notable occasion. Few things in the Scriptures are more striking than the amazing frugality which

they exhibit in the use of supernatural power. As far as I can see, the miracles mentioned in the Bible average about one to each century recorded: indeed, I find one period of four hundred years with no miracle at all. When, therefore, we come upon one of these rarities--invariably introduced to set the seal of divine authority on a new leader, a new institution or a new **system**—the wonder is all the more arresting and all the more impressive.

Moses placed the twelve rods, each representative of one of the houses of Israel, in the Tabernacle; and, when he returned next day to inspect them, eleven of them were exactly as they were before; but *the rod of Aaron had brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds!*

I fancy that I have myself witnessed something very similar. Like these twelve rods placed side by side in the Tabernacle, twelve people have come up to the house of the Lord. They have stood together for the singing of the hymns; they have bowed together for the prayers; they have listened together to the sermon. And then, together, they leave the sanctuary. Eleven of them are frankly unimpressed. They are glad they came; they felt that it was the correct thing to do; but their hearts have not been stirred. On the way home they mention casually that the sermon was rather long, that the choir was a trifle below its usual level, or that there was a nasty draught. Otherwise, they neither criticize nor rhapsodize. Like the eleven rods, they are exactly as they were; no better, no worse!

But the twelfth! He leaves the house of the Lord with a shining face. To him this has been the very gate of heaven. The hymns seemed to him the natural articulation of his own glad and grateful heart, and he sang them with all his soul. The prayers seemed to him the exact expression of his own deep need, and he added a silent Amen to every sentence. And the sermon! It was as if the angels had whispered into the ear of the preacher a narrative of his own circumstances and conditions, his own struggles and

temptations. Every word appeared specially designed for his comfort and encouragement. What a benediction the service had proved! The grim ghosts of yesterday had been laid! The dread of to-morrow had vanished! The crooked had been made straight and the rough places plain. Heaven had come down his soul to greet; glory had crowned the mercy seat. The ancient transformation had been *re-enacted*; *his rod had brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds*.

Or, like these twelve rods placed side by side in the Tabernacle, twelve theological students enter college on the very *selfsame* day. They come under the influence of the same tutors and professors; they apply themselves to the same curriculum; they are subject to the same discipline. And then, at just about the same time, they bid farewell to their Alma Mater, are ordained, and take charge of the congregations to which, one by one, they are called. Eleven of them exercise very useful and very instructive ministries, but in most respects they are pretty much as they were when they entered college. The rod has been carved and polished, that is all. But the twelfth! His very soul is aflame! A passion for the souls of men burns in his eyes; there is a wooing and a warning note in the accents of his voice; to him to live is Christ. The loveliness of his life commends to his people the evangel that he so earnestly preaches. It *is* the old story over again; *his rod brings forth buds and blooms blossoms and yields almonds*.

And why? Why, on the return of Moses to the Tabernacle, is the rod of Aaron such a *colourful* picture as compared with all the other rods? Why does that one worshipper leave the sanctuary with the light of heaven in his face? Why is the ministry of that one preacher so magnetic and so convincing and so effective? There is but one explanation. When the twelve rods were placed together in the Tabernacle, God must have seen in Aaron something that He could not see in any of the other princes of Israel. God must have seen in that one worshipper a penitence, a hunger, an expectancy that was absent from the hearts of the other eleven. God must have seen in that one young minister a lowliness, a *consecration*, a spiritual sensitiveness that was less marked in his

companions. And so He transfigured with His heavenly magic the rod of Aaron; He flooded with a sense of His presence and grace the soul of that one eager worshipper; and He crowned with the abundance of His Spirit the ministry of that man who clung so closely to Himself.

II

God always finds some way of indicating His will concerning the destinies of men, He may not always give the Sign of the Fleece as He did to Gideon, or the Sign of the Flowers as He did to Aaron, or the Sign of the Food as He did to Peter in his approach to the house of Cornelius; but by some sign, suited to the seeker and his special circumstances, God will find a means of directing those who earnestly desire His guidance. Some pillar of cloud will precede them in the daytime; some pillar of fire will blaze on their horizon in the night. To those who are willing to follow the gleam, there will always come a Kindly Light to lead.

In Church affairs, in business affairs, in love affairs, in all affairs, such leadership is sure. Indeed, the medieval writers seemed to think that the principle applied particularly to the romantic entanglements of young people. On the authority of an apocryphal tradition, they tore this story of Aaron's rod from its original setting and gave it a new and more tender turn. They declared that when the time came for the betrothal of Mary, destined to be the mother of Jesus, many attractive suitors sought her hand, Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, among the number. Instinctively feeling that the matter needed more than human wisdom, Zacharias the priest asked each youth for his staff. Having collected them, he placed them side by side in the Temple, just as Moses did the rods of the princes. And, when he returned next day to examine them, the staff of Joseph had burst into buds and blossoms! And those who have visited the Brera Gallery at Milan will remember that Raphael has made the legend the theme of one of his most famous paintings. In his picture, Mary and Joseph are standing together by the Temple gate; Joseph is placing the ring on Mary's finger; whilst, behind them,

one of the disappointed lovers is breaking his rod across his knee in chagrin and disgust.

III

If anyone should be tempted to suspect that I am making too much of this Old Testament story of the flowering rod, let him reflect upon the impressive circumstance that, by divine ordinance, that rod was perpetually preserved amidst the awful silences of the Holy of Holies. For there, in the immediate dwelling-place of the Most High, stood the Ark of the Covenant over which the cherubims of glory spread their wings. And within that Ark of gold there were kept three sacred symbols of Israel's pilgrimage - the Tables of Stone on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed, the Golden Pot that held the Manna, and Aaron's Rod that budded.

These three solemn souvenirs represented the three outstanding factors in the history of the wandering hosts. The Tables of Stone, bearing the divinely dictated Commandments, represented the Legislation of the People; the Golden Pot of Manna, containing the divinely dispensed sustenance, represented the Food of the People; and Aaron's Rod, the divinely chosen symbol of approved authority, represented the Leadership of the People. Law, Food, Leadership! What controversies have raged round those three words! That is why these three tokens are preserved in the Holiest of All. They must be saturated in the spirit of the sanctuary. The people who, in framing their legislation, recognize the basic mandates of the Most High; the people who, for the prosperity of their fields and their flocks, realize their utter dependence upon Him; the people who look to Him for leaders and for leadership; that people will always enjoy the benediction of heaven and the abundance of the fruits of the earth.

IV

Look just once more at these twelve rods as Moses deposits them, one by one, in the Tabernacle of Witness! How can it be

proved, by means of these rods, that Aaron is the divinely ordained Priest of Jehovah? And then, having marked the rods as they appeared overnight, look at them again as Moses finds them in the morning! Eleven of the rods remain bare and lifeless. But Aaron's has budded and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds!

It has budded-it lives!

It has bloomed-it is clothed in beauty!

It yields almonds-it is covered with fruit!

Life, beauty, fertility! These are the manifestations of the divine presence and pleasure! How can the Church vindicate to the world her mission among men? How can she justify her expenditure of time and energy and money on her sanctuaries, her ministries, her music, her ordinances, her organizations and her far-flung activities? She can never hope to convince men by means of the cogency of her creeds, the elegance of her ritual or the eloquence of her pulpits. She can only win for herself the confidence and the affection of men by these three means; she must vindicate herself, like Aaron's rod, by her vitality, her beauty, her fertility.

Tell the world that you are a Christian and the world will give a knowing smile. It has heard that story before. It may be true this time, or it may not. The onus of proof rests on you. How can your exalted claim be substantiated? In exactly the same way as in the case of Aaron. Let your life be exposed, like Aaron's rod, to those miraculous and transfiguring influences associated with the house of God. Dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty! Drench your spirit in the palpitating consciousness of the **Presence!** Then let an astonished world behold the resultant change!

Life! The dead rod has budded! That is precisely the wonder of which Paul writes. *I am crucified with Christ*, he says, *nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me!*

Beauty! The lifeless rod bloomed blossoms! There is no proof so convincing as a life marked by sweetness and strength, by winsomeness and grace, by the loveliness of selfless devotion and of **gracious** deeds.

Fruitfulness! The bare rod yielded almonds! That is exactly what Jesus emphasized in the parable that He unfolded to His disciples under the very shadow of the Cross. *I have chosen you and ordained you*, He said, that *ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain*. *The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine. I am the Vine; abide in Me!*

Life, beauty, fertility; these constitute the faith's unanswerable argument. He was a padre bending over a dying soldier. 'Let me read a few words to *you!*' he said, taking *out* his pocket *Testament*. 'Oh, I'm thirsty!' complained the soldier, and the chaplain rose and brought him water. 'Now may I read?' asked the padre. 'No,' replied the soldier, 'I'm cold!' The chaplain took off his own coat and wrapped it round the man. 'I'll read a word or two now!' said *the* minister. '*I'm* too tired!' moaned *the* man. 'Well,' answered the padre, 'pillow your head on my lap and try to get some sleep!' The man closed his eyes and lay still for awhile; but he soon opened them again. 'Look here, padre,' he exclaimed, 'if there's anything in that book of yours that will make one man behave towards another as *you've* behaved towards *me*, for God's sake read it!'

In the chaplain's patience and sympathy and devotion, the dying man had caught a glimpse of the buds and the blossoms and the almonds; and, convinced by that argument, his heart was won.

Chapter IV

Just as I am!

I HAVE a couple of very attractive young ladies on my hands; let me introduce them!

But, first, I must revisit the dreamy old churchyard at Grasmere, in Westmorland, the churchyard in which I spent a very memorable hour or *two* some years *ago*. Among the yews and *sycamores* of that quiet God's acre, the *Wordsworths* all slumber side by side. It struck me as very beautiful, that little group of *graves*. A

photograph of the six tombstones lies upon my desk at this moment, helping me to recapture the atmosphere in which the lovely place enfolded me.

Within a few feet of that long row of graves the crystal waters of the Rothay pursue their peaceful way. A low but massive stone wall divides the churchyard from the stream. In the delicious hush of that June morning, with no sound in my ears but the soothing murmur of the Rothay and the blithe notes of the birds, I sat for half an hour on that low wall, sometimes gazing afresh upon that magnetic group of graves; sometimes contemplating the square, romantic tower of old St. Oswald's Church close by-the church in which Wordsworth loved to worship-and sometimes letting my eye wander to Allan Bank (one of the poet's homes) on the hillside in the distance, to the straggling little village around me, and to the parsonage (another of Wordsworth's homes) just across the way.

The central stone bears the names of Wordsworth and his wife. Next on the right is the resting-place of Dora, the poet's 'one and matchless daughter'. She was, from the day of her birth, her father's darling; and when the health of poor Dorothy, his sister, who, through the years, had 'lent him eyes and lent him ears', suddenly went to pieces, Dora took her aunt's place at her father's side and became his constant companion.

Dora died three years before her father. And when, in 1850, Wordsworth's own last moment came, a sudden light illumined his rugged countenance. 'Is that you, Dora?' he asked, as if recognizing some dear, familiar face in the world unseen; and, not long after, he was gone.

I am attracted to Dora Wordsworth's grave to-day by something on the epitaph that deeply impressed me when my eye first fell upon it, and that has grown upon me with the years. It always seems to me the most conspicuous object in this photograph that lies before me. For at least a third of Dora's tombstone is occupied with a carving of a lamb-a lamb with a cross behind it. Why is that lamb the most prominent feature in that churchyard scene? It is to answer that question that I reach for my pen to-day.

I

And, to answer that question, I must forsake the company of Dora Wordsworth, and must seek the society of my second young lady, a contemporary of Dora's, who lived at the opposite end of the country. Like Dora Wordsworth, Charlotte Elliott was very frail; but there was this difference between them; Dora Wordsworth died in 1847 at the age of forty-three, whilst Charlotte Elliott lived to be an old lady of eighty-two. Before she died in 1871, therefore, Charlotte Elliott must have heard the story of Dora Wordsworth's tombstone at Grasmere: she may even have visited it: I do not know. If she did, the carving of the lamb must have filled her soul with an emotion far deeper than that with which ordinary onlookers behold it.

Charlotte Elliott provides us with an interesting psychological study. To begin with, she was the granddaughter of Henry Venn of Huddersfield, the bosom friend of the seraphic Charles Simeon, whose gracious influence on the life of his period was so widespread and indelible. Her brother, with whose ministry at Brighton she herself was so intimately associated, was named Henry Venn Elliott after him. Then, too, Charlotte was born and brought up at Clapham, in London, the stronghold of Evangelical Anglicanism, aggressive Nonconformity, and devout Quakerism. Everybody knows the story of the Clapham set. Thackeray is inclined to poke fun at its puritanical strictness; but, in his *Life of Macaulay-and* Macaulay was a contemporary of Charlotte's at Clapham—Sir George Otto Trevelyan retorts that there can have been nothing wrong with a system that produced the Wilberforces, the Stephens, the Grants, and the Macaulays. At Grove House, the home of the Elliots, religion dominated everything. The spirit of the great revival that gave birth to the Clapham movement swept through the house like a bracing wind from the upland moors and all the details of life and conduct were governed by a robust and simple faith.

The attitude of Charlotte herself to this welter of sanctity was an attitude neither of active sympathy nor of decided antipathy, but

of languid apathy. She admired the piety and devotion of those about her, but she did not share it. She attended the church; took part in family worship; enjoyed all sacred music; and recognized the beauty of character exhibited by her relatives and friends. But, so far as she herself was concerned, she felt herself to be an outsider. Her unworthiness oppressed her. She regarded herself as distinctly of the world. The only virtue with which she could credit herself was a certain indefinable and unutterable wistfulness. Above everything else she longed to possess the calm, unquestioning faith, the radiant and confident assurance, that she saw in her relatives.

The crisis broke upon her in May, 1822. Charlotte was thirty-three. An illustrious and honoured guest came to Grove House in the person of Dr. Caesar Malan of Geneva. Dr. Malan was strangely attracted by the shy and pensive girl who always seemed to be hovering on the fringe of things. In a way she was part and parcel of the spirit **of the home; and yet, when those things were discussed that meant everything to him and to his host and hostess,** she shrank into herself and dissociated herself from the conversation. Like Cowper's wounded deer, she left the herd. Dr. Malan determined to speak to her. In those days, and especially in Anglican circles, religious conversation of an intimate and personal kind was looked upon as almost improper—an outrage on delicacy. Perhaps Dr. Malan chose an unfortunate moment for his approach; perhaps he introduced the theme a trifle too brusquely; at any rate, the overture was scarcely a success. Drawing Charlotte aside, he begged her to take him into her confidence. Was she a Christian? The question, thus bluntly put, offended her. She bridled, blushed and hurried from his presence, asking him, in future, to be good enough to mind his own business. Dr. Malan stammered his regret at having wounded her, promised to pray for her happiness, and let the matter pass.

The memory of the incident troubled him, however, and, though he little suspected it, it troubled Charlotte even more. She realized that the good man had been actuated only by an intense desire for her well-being. Putting herself in his place, she

attractive and congenial conditions. His venture met with such success that, to this day, the school is, I understand, regarded as one of the best of its kind.

But its inauguration meant ceaseless activity, not only on the part of Mr. Elliott himself, but on the part of every member of his household. From early morning until late at night, they all worked assiduously to put St. Mary's Hall on its feet. But this whirlwind of consecrated energy again drove poor Charlotte back into herself. She had not the physical vitality to participate in it. She could not keep the pace. Whilst everybody around her was hard at work, she could only lie still and look enviously on. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Her compulsory idleness affected first her spirits, then her nerve, and, finally, her faith. Why was she alone excluded from this flutter of happy industry? Was it because she was so unworthy? Could God find no place for her in His great scheme of things? Had He rejected and discarded her? Was she a castaway?

The torture of this suspicion reached its climax on a certain evening in 1834. Charlotte was then forty-five. She was left alone in the pleasant boudoir set apart for her enjoyment in the lovely home at Westfield Lodge. Mr. and Mrs. Elliott, together with all the other members of the household, had gone to an important function in connection with the founding of the new school. The thoughts that had been such an agony to her during recent weeks swept back with redoubled force to attack her in her loneliness. She felt that these depressing suggestions must be met-and conquered! But how? She resolved to probe to the very root of the matter. It was not merely a question of participation or non-participation in the life of her brother's church or in the duties of his home. It went much deeper. It was a matter of the salvation of her very soul. The horror that had enfolded her from time to time was the horror of spiritual dereliction-the thought that God had spurned her. Was that true? Her mind swung back to that afternoon in the garden at Clapham.

'I feel that I should very much like to come to Christ; but I don't know Bowl' she had said to Dr. Caesar Malan.

has survived the crucial test of translation as successfully as this one. It is sung to-day in practically every known language. Mr. Moody used to say that, at his immense evangelistic meetings, it moved the hearts of his huge audiences as no other hymn could do. And Charlotte's brother, at the end of his life, said to those who watched beside his bed that, whilst he rejoiced in the success that had attended his own ministry, he felt that infinitely more good had been done, the wide world over, by the deathless verses that his **sister** had penned.

III

And this brings us back to that little group of graves in Grasmere Churchyard.

When Charlotte Elliott's hymn was first sent out into the world as an anonymous leaflet, somebody, as we have seen, sent a copy to Charlotte herself. And somebody else, knowing that Dora Wordsworth, the poet's daughter, was seriously ill, sent a copy to her. At first Dora felt too far gone to take the slightest interest in it. Later, however, somebody read it aloud, very slowly and very softly, beside her bed:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that **Thy** blood **was shed for me,**
And that **Thou** bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of **God, I come!**

The effect was startling. 'Why,' the dying woman exclaimed, 'that **is** the very thing for me!' And she begged that it might be read again and again and yet again. Sometimes she would ask for it as often as ten times a day. Occasionally, I like to think, her father, the laureate, read it to her.

'Now my hymn!' she would entreat, with a sad, tired smile; and, as the words were read, she would frame the syllables with her lips in a kind of ecstasy. All her thoughts were of the Lamb; all her faith was in the Lamb; all her hope rested on the Lamb! O Lamb of God, I come!

And so, when they laid her in that grassy spot in the beautiful lake country-the spot to which her father came three years later

to lie down beside her—they carved the figure of the Lamb and the Cross boldly upon her tombstone, and, underneath, a text!

Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out! That is the text on Dora Wordsworth's tomb,

Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out! That is the text that Charlotte Elliott inscribed at the head of her original draft of the hymn,

And now that I have introduced my two young ladies, and now that they have blended their voices in so sublime a symphony, I may very well lay down my pen,

Chapter V

The Harvest is Past

IT was John Allen who gave me my text for the Harvest Festival this year. The brave record of John Allen will be found in the Minutes of the British Methodist Conference of the year 1810. 'I was born', he tells us, 'in Derbyshire in 1737. From eight years of age I had many serious thoughts; especially when it thundered and lightened or when I heard a funeral bell. When I was about sixteen, I was deeply convinced of sin by reading the eighth chapter of Jeremiah, particularly these words: *The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved.* I concluded that my day of grace was past. The thought almost broke my heart and caused me to weep bitterly before the Lord.'

The harvest is past! The summer is ended! We are not saved! The prophet's parable is the Parable of a Beleaguered City. Hemmed in by hostile hosts, the garrison has scanned the horizon day after day in the fond hope of discovering some sign of the relieving forces. Supplies of food and of water are running so low that the men will soon be at their last gasp. And now autumn has come: the winter rains will soon convert the roads into an impassable quagmire: the season favourable to the advance of the succouring columns will have gone by. The harvest is past, they

sigh; the summer is ended; and still we are not relieved! Those who have read Tennyson's *Defence of Lucknow* or Banjo Paterson's Ride to *Kimberley*, and those who have followed with breathless concern the attempts to relieve beleaguered garrisons in more recent wars, will thoroughly understand Jeremiah's meaning.

I

The prophet's picture vividly depicts the tragedy of a defective life—the lonely garrison separated from the main army, the part cut off from the whole. The man who, ignorant of history, stands isolated from all the romance and adventure of Yesterday, finds it difficult to play his part effectively as a citizen of To-day. The man who knows nothing of geography, and has no eyes for that pageant of life and colour presented by the continents and islands of the world, must of necessity find his outlook narrow, mean, and parochial. When men thought of this globe as the central orb—the only world worth mentioning—and regarded all the twinkling lights in the skies as celestial lanterns suspended there for our illumination, they enjoyed no sense of immensity, of infinity, of eternity. They were *cribb'd, cabin'd* and confined—insects crawling on a mound, flies buzzing in a closed room. Robert Chambers, the Scottish scientist and historian, says that the greatest day of his life was the day on which he found, in an old attic cupboard, a copy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Until that moment he had no idea of the existence of such things as literature, art, geology and astronomy. It was, he declares, like cutting a window in a prison cell through which he saw the world and the heaven beyond.

II

Now, this Parable of the Beleaguered City is of superlative value to us preachers. It elucidates a point on which men's minds are in a welter of confusion. In listening to our sermons about sin and the need of salvation, thousands of our hearers silently ask themselves two particularly searching questions. What, they wonder,

what is this dreadful state of dereliction and alienation **against** which the minister is warning me? And what exactly does he mean by the salvation of which he talks so much? Many a man, on his way home from church, puts to himself **such** queries. What are the enormities that **i** am assumed to have committed? What are the heinous offences of which **I** am supposed to be guilty? And, in all honesty, he finds it difficult to sheet home to himself any very serious charge.

But this Parable of the Beleaguered City makes it clear that the supreme tragedy of the human soul consists in its having become separated from God. It is not so much that **I** have committed any gross immorality, any bleak and loathsome transgression: it is that **I** have, almost inadvertently, allowed myself to drift out of vital touch with Him. Like the garrison in the besieged city, cut off from the main body and from its base of supplies, **I** have become detached from God.

This being so, it inevitably follows that the sinister forces that are bent upon my destruction will concentrate, not so much on inducing me to commit any horrible and outrageous iniquity, but on keeping me from any kind of contact with Him Who alone can help and **deliver me**. Those malignant powers that seek to compass the shipwreck of my soul are not so anxious **that** **i** should smash my way through the Ten Commandments, as that **i** should live my life in utter indifference to God. As long as there is no line of communication between myself and my Maker, **I** am utterly and lamentably lost.

And what, our congregations ask themselves, what does the preacher mean by salvation? What is it to be saved? What must one do to be saved? Is it the attaining of some lofty standard of virtue? Or what is it? This Parable of the Beleaguered **City** makes it clear. The city is **saved when the imperial forces from which it** has been severed come marching into its streets once more. The **soul** is saved when it is reunited with God. As soon as Christ enters the heart, bringing **the** wealth of His divine grace, the new day has dawned.

III

The deliverance of the garrison depends very largely on effective co-operation between the beleaguered and the relieving forces. In the last resort, of course, help can only come from without. Everything—or almost everything—depends on the organization, equipment, and **despatch** of a force powerful enough to cut its way through the hordes of the besiegers, reuniting the isolated garrison with its base.

But the garrison must not remain passive and inactive. There must be wistful expectation and sleepless vigilance: there must be ceaseless resistance and uncompromising defiance: there must be sallies and sorties: there must be a swift sensitiveness to detect any sign of approaching relief, and an ingenious readiness to aid the relievers by signals or directional information. In Banjo Paterson's poem, he tells of the messages that the starving people, shut up in **Kimberley**, flashed by heliograph to Lord French's advancing columns; and we all know how, at **Lucknow**, Jessie Brown, straining her ears, electrified the soldiers by declaring that she could catch the sound of distant bagpipes. 'Dinna ye hear it?' she cried. 'Dinna ye hear it?'

Outram and **Havelock** breaking their way through the fell mutineers,
Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing again in our **ears**!

Similarly, it is by the eager co-operation of the human soul with the divine forces that are working for its salvation that deliverance is triumphantly effected.

IV

The haggard men posted on the city walls shade their eyes with their hands as they look this way and that way for any sign of **succour**. But there is none. They shiver as they feel the keenness in the autumn wind. *The harvest is past*, they say to one another, *the harvest is past, the summer is ended, ad still we are not relieved!*

But what then? We are not saved, it is true; but, on the other hand, we are not lost! The city has not fallen to the foe! In the *Life of George Whitefield* it is recorded **that** on one occasion he was preaching to a congregation that included Lord Chesterfield.

Whitefield was arguing that a man who has no guide but his own reason is like a blind man being led by a dog. He described the man making his dangerous way along the brink of a precipice, clutching the string that bound him to his dog. Suddenly, by a telling gesture and a look of horror on his face, Whitefield cleverly suggested that the blind man's foot had slipped. Lord Chesterfield sprang to his feet in alarm. 'Good heavens,' he cried, 'he's gone!' Whitefield paused and, addressing Lord Chesterfield, exclaimed, 'No, my lord, he is not quite gone; and, since he is not yet lost, he may still be saved!'

A similar thought thrilled poor Mr. Scrooge when, on Christmas morning, he awoke from his terrible dream. All the grim visions of the desolating consequences of his greed were but a nightmare after all! The ghastly things had never happened! He was not the lost soul that he had thought himself to be! He could not express his thankfulness. He repudiated all the selfishness that had disfigured his wretched and vowed that henceforth he would live only to secure the happiness of others.

'Scrooge', says Dickens, 'was better than his word. He did it all and infinitely more. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh. His own heart laughed and that was quite enough for him.'

TO be sure, he was not saved. His dreadful dream had shown him that. But the unforgettable sensation of his waking moments was the realization that he was not irreparably lost. Since he was not lost, salvation was at least possible. If salvation was possible, Scrooge vowed that it should become actual. And so it **came** about.

V

Still, since the harvest is past and the summer is gone, the situation is as near to being desperate as it can very well be. The most favourable time for relief has slipped away. If no **succour** came in summer-time, and none in autumn-time, **is** it likely to come in winter-time?

Harvest-time and summer-time! There are periods that are more favourable than others to the salvation of the soul. Youth, of course, is the natural and obvious period. Some years ago Dr. Starbuck made an exhaustive study of the phenomena of conversion and published the results of his investigation in a suggestive volume in the *Contemporary Science Series*. Having sent out forms to no fewer than twelve hundred persons of note in the religious world, asking for particulars concerning their own conversions, he set to work to elaborate his replies. He found that a good number were converted between the ages of seven and nine; many more between nine and twelve; and a greater number still between twelve and sixteen. Between sixteen and twenty there are fewer; fewer still between twenty and thirty; and after thirty they are very rare. These findings are almost frightening.

In the work with which we set out—the personal confessions of John Allen, the eighteenth-century revivalist—we were impressed by the fact that it was at the age of sixteen that John Allen ‘almost broke his heart’ and ‘wept bitterly before the Lord’, because of his conviction that his harvest-time had passed and that his summer-time had ended, leaving him yet unsaved. At sixteen, mark you! In the *Journal* of Andrew Bonar, the friend and biographer of McChesney, I find this entry on his nineteenth birthday: ‘May 3 1, 1829. My birthday is past and I am not yet born again!’ John Allen terrified lest, at sixteen, he had left the great transaction until it was too late! Andrew Bonar similarly worried at nineteen! On the face of it, these fears seem a trifle absurd. And yet Dr. Starbuck’s conclusions prove that both Allen and Bonar had good ground for apprehensions. Youth is the ideal time, the normal time, the usual time; and if youth has begun to fade, the alarm expressed in the prophet’s parable becomes the fitting and natural attitude of the soul: *The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved.*

VI

We are *not* saved! Contrast the gloom of those four words with the gladness of the *We are saved!* in Tennyson’s famous poem. He

describes Havelock's glorious Highlanders entering Lucknow:

Dance to the pibroch! Saved! We are saved! Is it you? Is it you?
Saved by the valour of Havelock! Saved by the blessing of heaven!

And the closing lines of Banjo Paterson's ballad on *The Relief of Kimberley* are set in the same key:

And French rode into Kimberley: the people cheered **amain**;
The women came **with** tear-stained eyes to kiss his bridle-rein;
The starving children lined the streets to raise a feeble cheer;
The bells rang out a joyous peal to say, Relief is **here!**

Are there any records in our British annals more moving than these stories of the relief of beleaguered cities? The joy of it takes me back to John Allen, in whose company we set out, For although he felt at sixteen that his harvest-time was past and his summer ended, his imperilled soul was saved after all. 'I was one day crying to God', he tells us, 'when I felt the love of God shed abroad in my heart and was constrained to cry out:

'For sinners like me

He died on the tree.

Ah, who would *not* love such a Saviour as Thee?

'My soul was filled with peace and I rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God.'

And so, as in the relief of the city, tears of overwhelming grief give place to tears of inexpressible gratitude. The **succouring** forces have entered the city: the Saviour has entered the soul!

Chapter VI

A Splinter of Stone

I CAME recently upon an old cemetery that has been converted into a public garden—a thing of flower beds and fountains and pleasant walks. The tombstones that once marked the graves now stand around the wall. Most of them are indecipherable: many are broken. Among the latter I found one fragment that bears but

three words of the original inscription. Only three words; but *such* words! *More than conqueror!*

That splinter of stone reminds me of Oliver Cromwell and of Catherine Booth. It was on Friday, August 20, 1658, that George Fox went down to Hampton Court to see Oliver Cromwell concerning the persecution of the Quakers. Fox was a young fellow of thirty-four; Cromwell was in his sixtieth year. As he entered the park, Fox saw Cromwell riding bravely at the head of his Life Guards. But, well as Cromwell looked, Fox felt a whiff of death go forth against him. I have no idea as to what Fox means, and I doubt if anybody else has; but I suppose that Quakers of the mettle of George Fox experience sensations and repercussions of which ordinary mortals know nothing. However that may be, Oliver Cromwell died within a fortnight of that meeting; but not until, on his sick-bed, he had murmured again and again, 'I am a conqueror, and more *than a conqueror*, through Him who loveth me!'

Who that was in London (as I was) on October 14, 1890, can forget the extraordinary scenes that marked the funeral of Catherine Booth? It was a day of universal grief. The whole nation mourned. For Mrs. Booth was one of the most striking personalities and one of the mightiest spiritual forces of the nineteenth century. To the piety of a Saint Teresa she added the passion of a Josephine Butler, the purposefulness of an Elizabeth Fry, and the practical sagacity of a Frances Willard. The greatest in the land revered her, trusted her, consulted her, deferred to her. The letters that passed between Catherine Booth and Queen Victoria are among the most remarkable documents in the literature of correspondence. Mr. Gladstone attached the greatest weight to her judgement and convictions. Bishop Lightfoot, one of the most distinguished scholars of his time, has testified to the powerful influence which she exerted over him. And whilst the loftiest among men honoured her, the lowliest loved her, as those dense black crowds eloquently proved. And what was the text that dominated that unforgettable occasion? It was the text that was inscribed upon the brass plate on the coffin, and, afterwards, on the stone-work round the tomb: *More than conqueror!* She had

known stress and strain, persecution and pain, such as fall to the lot of few women: yet, in spite of it all, she was *more* than *conqueror* through Him who loved her.

I

The house is hushed. People move about on tip-toe. A doctor is in attendance. A nurse flits hither and thither. Somebody dying? you naturally inquire. No; somebody being born. Somebody, that is to say, beginning to live; somebody beginning to fight; somebody beginning to die. We need not stress the first point-beginning to live-it is so obvious. Nor the last-beginning to die-it is, we may hope, so remote. But beginning to *fight*! That is the thing that matters. For this newcomer is a born warrior. He fights for his first breath: he will fight for his last breath: and he will fight all the way from the one to the other.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the dominant note in all human experience-and especially in all Christian experience-is the militant note. Life is a fight, and a fight to a finish. Every man is engrossed in a desperate struggle, and his one aspiration-the dream of all his days-is the dream of conquest.

I went on Saturday to see a cricket match. It was a school match -Scotch versus Wesley-on the Scotch College ground. It had rained all night, and I was not at all sure that play would be possible. This may have accounted for the fact that I arrived a few minutes late. When I alighted from the tram I saw two or three very small boys, wearing Scotch College caps, playing near the gate.

'Is there to be any cricket?' I asked,

'Oh, yes,' replied one of these youngsters, brightening excitedly. 'They're playing now, Four wickets down for three runs!'

I felt that I was missing something, and hurried my steps along the gravel path towards the oval. But, before I reached it, I became conscious that I was being pursued. Glancing back, I found myself confronting the boy who had given me the score. He was out of breath; but, so soon as he could recover his powers of speech, he exclaimed:

'I forgot to **tell** you: it's Wesley **batting**!'

I assured him that I had formed that impression from our earlier interview. But, in his anxious eyes, I caught a glimpse of warrior pride. He could not bear to think that, even for a few moments, I should fancy that it was his team that was being routed.

II

But *more* than conqueror! What is it to be *more* than conqueror? The best way of showing the size of a monument is to let a man stand beside it. Through Christ's great grace, Paul says, we may be more than conquerors. Let the conquerors, the most glorious conquerors of the ages, stand beside *Him*, and see how He dwarfs them all! Therein lies the significance of *that* poignant *letter* that, with death staring him in the face, Napoleon wrote from Longwood, St. Helena:

'You speak', he says, 'of conquerors; but of what value are our conquests? Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. Rut on what? On force! Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and, at this hour, millions of men would die for Him. I inspired multitudes; but my physical presence-the lightning of my eyes, the sound of my voice, the words of my lips-was necessary to kindle and maintain the sacred fire in their hearts. But now *that* I am here at St. Helena, chained to this rock, who fights and wins empires for me? What an abyss between my deep misery and the eternal reign of Christ! He is everywhere proclaimed, loved, and adored, and His sway is extending over all the *earth!*' Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon were conquerors: who can doubt it? But stand them beside Christ, as you stand the man beside the monument, and you begin to see the significance of Paul's immortal phrase. They are conquerors: He is *more* than conqueror; and we may be *more* than *conquerors* through Him.

III

There is no painting in our Melbourne Art Gallery of which I am more fond than of Mr. St. George Hare's *Victory of Faith*. It presents two young girls-one of white skin and one of *black*—

awaiting martyrdom in an ante-room of the arena. On the morrow they are to be thrown to the lions. And how are they spending their last night on earth? With their arms lightly thrown about each other's shoulders, they are fast asleep. And Mr. St. George Hare calls it *The Victory of Faith*. Victory-over what? Victory over all the might of the Caesars: what do they care for the tyranny of their persecutors? They are sweetly sleeping! Victory over *all* their feminine frailties: the lions have lost their terror; they are in the land of lovely dreams! Victory over all racial prejudice: black and white are in each other's arms! Victory over death, for, to them, death has no more terror than the slumber in which they are now indulging.

I have sometimes thought that Mr. St. George Hare must have had this passage of Paul's open before him as he painted his noble picture. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Peril? Sword?* Here is a terrifying array of antagonisms! And every *one of them* is to be seen in the painting. And to this formidable list, Paul bravely answers, Nay, *in all these things*-the things in the list; the things in the picture-we are *more than conquerors through him that loved us*.

As I glance once more at the *picture* of these two girls, whose nakedness is but the emblem of the fact that they have been stripped of everything, I see three possibilities open to them. They might have spent that last night bemoaning their lot and conjuring up horrifying visions of the coming day. That would have been the defeat of faith. They might have huddled together, clasping each other's hands, grimly resolving to be loyal to their Lord, come what might. That would have been the triumph of faith. But *they did neither* of these things. They just lay down and slept! And, sleeping, they revealed themselves as *more than conquerors* through Him whose love and care they never for a moment doubted,

IV

If I were asked to point an inquirer along the road that leads to this superlative conquest, I think I should *tell* the story of Donald

Menzies. He is, of course, one of the rugged characters given us by Ian Maclaren, and, in most of the editions of *Beside the Brier Bush*, a fine portrait of Donald Menzies, by William Hole, R.S.A., enriches the volume.

Donald sounded all the depths of spiritual dereliction. His depression knew three zones. He was sometimes content to liken himself to Achan, the troubler of Israel, who laid his covetous band upon the accursed thing. More frequently he insisted that, like Simon Peter, he had repeatedly denied his Lord. And, when things with Donald were at their worst, he would link his name with that of Judas Iscariot: with a kiss he had chosen the lot of the betrayer.

At length, however, there came a day on which, out of sheer pity, his minister went to see how it fared with poor Donald. To his astonishment, he met Donald: a new Donald; a Donald with his head in the air and his face shining. The two men walked side by side for awhile among the primroses, with a bank of golden gorse beside them and the stream babbling over the stones at their feet.

Then, at last, Donald spoke. He had been sitting in his cottage, reflecting upon his terrible transgressions, when all at once a word flashed into his mind. The *blood of Jesus* Christ, *His Son*, cleanseth us *from all sin*. It was, Donald said, like a gleam from the mercy seat. It seemed to still everything. He waited awhile to see if anything else could be said to contradict or counteract that one tremendous word. There was none,

'I leaped to my feet', Donald explained, his eyes ablaze with triumph, 'and I looked round, and there was Janet sitting in the opposite chair. Sensing the struggle in *her* husband's soul, she was repeating to herself, *Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.'

That is the first step on the road to conquest. And he who takes that road, and follows it, will find himself, not only a conqueror, but *more than a conqueror* through the Saviour's deathless grace.

*Chapter VII**A Point of Honour*

Is God under any obligation to give another life? The question is often asked. It is seldom answered. Probably for the simple reason that it almost answers itself.

If any work of God is left unfinished here, it is presumptive, if not conclusive, evidence that He intends to finish it hereafter. In many parts of the world-on Calton Hill, Edinburgh, for example-there are the stately columns of buildings that, assuming most magnificent proportions in the architect's plans, were begun but never continued and therefore never completed. They stand as imposing and picturesque fragments. Is it conceivable that Almighty God will begin a beautiful painting, and, after a few preliminary touches, toss aside the brushes? Can anybody imagine that, sculptor-like, He will set out to woo an angel from the shapeless marble, and then, tiring of His work, forsake the studio? Would it be like Him to write the opening stanzas of one of His sublime poems and then drop the pen, leaving the noble song half-sung? I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, He says, again and again and again. The meaning is clear. He goes right through. What He commences, He completes. He is the Author and the Finisher. He 'that hath begun a *good work*, says Paul, will *perform it unto the end*. There are no frayed edges or loose ends in the divine handiwork. It follows, therefore, that if, in this life, some divine task is left half-finished, it is because the work will be brought to perfection in some other realm.

We'll **catch** the broken threads again,
And finish what we here began;
Heaven will the mysteries explain,
And then, ah then, we'll understand.

But for some such hope, the entire scheme of things, as we know it, would be unintelligible. In his famous Postscript, Victor Hugo **said** that, for fifty years, he had been writing history, philosophy,

drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song. 'I have tried them all,' he says. 'But', he adds, 'I feel that I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me. Why is my soul more luminous as my bodily powers begin to fail? The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the world to come. When I go down to my grave, I shall have finished one day's work. But my life will not be finished. Another day will begin next morning.' With still greater vehemence Browning makes Paracelsus cry:

Truly there needs another life to come!

If this be all- . . .

And other life await us not-for one

I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,

A wretched failure. I, for one, protest

Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

A cheat, mark you, a stupid bungle, a wretched failure! Is it possible to arraign Almighty God in such terms? There is only one way of escape. We avoid so blasphemous a conclusion by making up our minds that, in order to bring His work to an orderly culmination, God has placed Himself under an obligation to give another life.

He must continue His programme in some other realm in order to be true to Himself, Have we even yet entered into the poignant pathos of the opening chapters of the Bible? What do these majestic stanzas mean? They mean, if they mean anything, that God was lonely; terribly lonely; we should have been lonely, placed as He was placed. And He set Himself to make for Himself an intimate, a confidant, a mate. We feel, as we approach the record, that, having completed the brute creation, He is now venturing upon something entirely different, something infinitely more splendid, something really transcendent, He made *man* in His own image-godlike; like God; almost a god-and, we are told, walked with him in the cool of the day. It is an exquisite, a lover-like phrase. But is it conceivable that God would have created, for

His own divine companionship, a mere animal, however intelligent, a thing whose breath was in its nostrils, a creature destined only for the grave? The very suggestion is abhorrent to us; the conception is repugnant: it grates upon our finer feelings.

Professor A. W. Momerie says that Pietro, the tyrannical Duke of Florence, in one of his capricious moods, compelled Michelangelo to mould a statue out of snow—a statue that the warmth of an Italian sun would dissolve within an hour or two. It was a wanton waste of the immortal master's genius. Yet that, as Professor Momerie points out, is a mere *trifle* as compared with the prostitution of creative power represented by the making of men in so divine a mould, only to allow them *to rot for ever in a tomb!*

But we must go a step farther. When the Lord God formed the body of man from the dust of the ground, to be His consort, He made him *in His own image*. And not only so, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of *life*—the very stuff and principle of life *itself*. And man became *a living soul*. The phraseology contrasts sharply and dramatically with that employed in the story of the making of the beasts. God breathed into man His very spirit, His very essence, His very self. And, having become a partaker of the divine nature, he can no more die than God Himself can perish.

Perhaps, therefore, we have erred in our statement of the question. Is God under any obligation to give *another* life? It is not a matter of one life and *another* life: this life and *that* life: the life *here* and the life *yonder*. It is a matter of life itself. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life: and life is necessarily a deathless thing. As Tennyson sings in *Locksley Hall*:

. . . *since our dying race began*

Ever, ever and for ever was the leading light of man.

Truth for truth and good for good! The good, the true, the pure, the just;
Take the charm For Ever from them and they crumble into dust.

It is his passion for immortality, his sense of infinity, his instinct of eternity that makes man man,

II

God must continue His programme in some other realm in order to vindicate His own code of justice and honour.

God has inscribed that code of justice and honour, not only in external enactments, but in the very thought and tissue of the man whom He has made. When He made man in His own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He invested him with His own passion for justice and honour. And, even after ages of degradation, that passion lives in him still.

His passion for Justice! Man is incorrigibly just. Will anything arouse a fiercer storm of protest than an obvious miscarriage of justice in our courts of law? A man may act unjustly; but, acting unjustly, he knows that he is acting unjustly; and the very fact that he knows that he is acting unjustly, proves that his sense of justice is fundamental whilst his act of injustice is anomalous, incongruous, and unnatural. I heard a lecturer in the park impeaching the justice of Almighty God. I could see at once that he had misunderstood Almighty God. But the thing that impressed me was the fact that, in the depths of his soul, this secularist carried the sense of justice that moved him to criticize his Maker! Man is incurably just!

His passion for Honour! And is not man fundamentally honourable? Then why is everybody indignant when a fickle lover repudiates the pledge that he gave to the girl who loved and trusted him? Why does the blood boil when a man, breaking his promise to a little child, leaves him broken-hearted? Why does even a racecourse crowd despise the man who repudiates his debts of honour? Man is incurably honourable.

[But, as the Psalmist argues, *He that formed the eye, shall He not see?* A blind God could not have made a seeing world. By the same token, a deaf God could not have made a hearing world. And, carrying the principle to its logical conclusion, an unjust God could not have made a just world. Nor could a dishonourable God have created an honourable world. Clearly, therefore, the Creator of the Universe is the soul of honour, the fountain-head of justice.

But His justice is not always apparent in this world. He must, therefore, be leaving some of His accounts to be settled hereafter.

Here, on my desk at this moment, are two of the best-known and most popular books in the language—*Robinson Crusoe* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Let us open them!

In later life, as everybody knows, Robinson Crusoe returned to the island on which he had once been a castaway, and again made *it* his home. He soon enjoyed the companionship of Will Atkins, a shipwrecked sailor, whom Crusoe succeeded in leading to the Saviour. In course of time, Atkins took as his mate a dusky maiden from one of the savage tribes that occasionally visited the island. He then became as eager for her conversion as Crusoe had been for *his*. But the task of winning her for his Lord was beset by difficulties. In magnifying the mercy that had transfigured his own life, Atkins had luridly described the life of shame that had preceded his conversion. This filled the dusky girl's mind with a strange thought. If that be so, she objected, God cannot be a good God, or a just God, or a righteous God. For, if He loved goodness and hated evil-doing, He would have punished this rough-and-ready lover of hers by striking him down in the midst of his transgressions. This objection was too much for Atkins, who resorted to Crusoe for advice as to how the objection was to be answered.

'Tell her', replied Crusoe, 'that our God is very merciful, of infinite goodness and long-suffering. He waits to be gracious, willing not the death of a single sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. He can afford *to* wait, reserving His punishments for a life beyond. Tell her that the patience of God is clear evidence of a future state, since righteous men receive not their reward, nor wicked men their punishment, in this world.' So much for *Robinson Crusoe*; now for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

It is just before Eliza's escape across the broken ice to Canada—and freedom. Her husband *is* heartbroken at the thought of losing her; but, fearing that her love may one day bring her back to him—and to slavery—he sends word, by the good old Quaker, entreating her, if she once sets foot on Canadian soil, to stay there

for their boy's sake. 'Tell her to bring up our boy a free man; for slavery, even under the kindest master, slavery means misery.'

'Yes, George,' replied the Quaker. 'I'll tell her. Trust in God, George; I wish that you, too, were safe!'

'Trust in God!' echoes George bitterly. 'Is there a God to trust in? A God for you, perhaps; but no God for us!'

'There is! There is!' exclaimed the Quaker sympathetically. 'Clouds and darkness are round about Him, but righteousness and judgement are the habitation of His throne! There is a God, George! Trust Him! He'll help you! Everything will be set right-if not in this life, in another!'

'Thank you for saying that,' replied George reflectively, 'thank you for saying that, my good friend; *I'll* think of *that*!'

It is worth thinking of. In order to vindicate His own code of justice and honour, God is under an obligation to give another life.

III

God must continue His programme in some other realm in order to keep faith with the promise that He has made to men in this.

There is nothing more universal than the sense of immortality. Men of every age and class and kind have felt the instinct of the eternal. To quote Tennyson's lines again:

. . . since our dying race began

Ever, ever and for ever was the leading light of man.

Does not that constitute a promise? And does not its repudiation represent a breach of promise? If God has inculcated in the minds of a thousand separate tribes in a thousand separate generations, a confident expectation of immortality, He is under a solemn obligation to gratify the desire that He has Himself created.

And He will. There can be no doubt of that. Everything, in Scripture, in history, in scholarship, and in human nature points conclusively in that direction. But what then? 'Man has for ever!' Browning exclaims in the *Grammarian's Funeral*. Man has for ever! But what will he do with it? That *is* always the question. Life presents us at every turn with two problems--a minor problem

and a major. The minor problem is: How to acquire? The major problem is: How to administer our acquisitions? It is comparatively easy to possess ourselves of money, learning, influence, power, fame, and a thousand other things. But a much more complex problem presents itself when we ask ourselves what we shall do with these things now that they are ours. And it is upon our solution of that major and ultimate problem, rather than on our solution of the minor and preliminary one, that destiny depends.

Man has for ever, Browning avers. What will he do with it now that it is his? That is the thing that matters. The New Testament differentiates sharply between *everlasting existence*, which is the lot of every man and which may be a thing of shame and misery, and everlasting *life*, which is the glory of those who follow the Son of God. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* The wise man, conscious of his own immortality, and anxious to make the best of it, will lay himself *in* contrition and in consecration at the Saviour's feet that his everlasting soul may be purged of every defilement already contracted, and be made, by the divine grace, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

Chapter VIII

Dreams

CONCERNING dreams, it is safe to make two introductory affirmations. The *first* is that the most ecstatic and the most terrifying moments that we have any of us spent were spent in dreams. The *second* is that we have each of us, at some time or other, been profoundly influenced by a dream,

By dreams we usually mean night-dreams, the dreams that punctuate our slumbers. But the study of such dreams is a treacherous and elusive one. It is so difficult to account for dreams. They may have their root in inspiration, but then again, and just as probably, they may arise from indigestion. They are

wayward things, subject to no fixed laws. If they come, they come; if they don't, they don't; there is nothing that we can do about it.

I

Yet, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the dreams that come by night have their sublime side. What was it that Elihu said to Job? *God speaketh once, yea twice; yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction.* Some years ago, in order to write my volumes on *Texts that made History*, it was my duty to study closely some hundreds of classic conversion stories. It was a most stimulating and memorable investigation. And one of the things that deeply impressed me at the time was the fact that, in so many of these cases, a dream played an important part. It may be argued, of course, that, since the man was so harassed and worried by tormenting thoughts of sin and God and heaven and hell, it was the most natural thing in the world that he should dream weird, fantastic dreams concerning such things. The argument is unanswerable; but the fact remains that, whether as a result of the operation of natural causes or as a result of special interposition, the dream came, and, in coming, assisted in the precipitation of a spiritual crisis.

It has to be remembered, however, that a dream, even if divinely sent, is a purely personal matter between God and the dreamer. Like all other mystical manifestations of the divine grace and power, it carries little or no conviction to anybody else. There is, for example, such a thing as the assurance of salvation. A man may reach complete certainty as to his own interest in the Cross of Christ. He may be absolutely sure that his sins are all forgiven, that he is a child of God and that his name is written in the Lamb's book of life. But the mysterious and subjective evidences that convince him will convince nobody else. His radiant spiritual experience is a secret between God and himself. He can only prove to others what has been divinely proved to him by its practical effect upon his daily life.

So *is* it with dreams. The dream may convince the dreamer; but it is of no evidential value to anybody but himself. When Mr. Wesley returned from his fruitless visit to America, the ship anchored in the evening. In the roadstead lay another vessel just about to sail for America. Mr. Wesley learned that Mr. Whitehead was on board that vessel. He was very distressed; for he particularly desired to have Mr. Whitefield's company in England. Early next morning, he sent a messenger by a boat to the other ship. 'Tell Mr. Whitefield', he said, '**that** I have had a dream during the night and that it has been made clear to me that he is not to go to America!' George Whitefield received ~~the~~ message and paced the deck for a moment or two in deep thought. 'Go back to Mr. Wesley', he said to the messenger, 'and say that, if God had wished me to turn back, He would have given *me* the dream! Why should He send the dream to Mr. Wesley?' And he calmly went on with his tour.

II

But man's most sublime dreams are his day-dreams. The masterpieces of literature are, for the most part, dreams. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a series of dreams-The Vision of Hell, The Vision of Purgatory, The Vision of Paradise, and so on. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a glorious dream-a dream of cherubims and seraphims, of angels and archangels. And, of course, Bunyan's immortal *allegory* is a dream.

But the dreams of men are not all bound up in books. Few of them, indeed, find their way into literature. In his Song of *the Engineers*, for example, Mr. Berton Braley sings:

We are members of an order that is guided on by dreams,
By the *voices* of the prophets and the seers,
And, unless you care for service more than money-getting schemes,
You had better never join the Engineers.

'Members of an order that is guided on by dreams!' I like that. As in the case of Dante's masterpiece and Bunyan's and Milton's, the poem that we call the Panama Canal was first of all a dream.

So was the Sydney Harbour Bridge; so was the Nile Dam; so were all the works of the master-engineers. Before a single sod was turned, or a stone quarried, or a hammer raised, the titanic structure existed in its entirety in somebody's inner consciousness.

It is here that man rises sublimely from the plane of the beasts, I suppose that, in common with ourselves, animals have their night-dreams. Jack London, who seems to know all that there is to be known about the inner *life* of dogs and wolves-their secret thoughts and feelings-says that dogs dream. But their dreams are always of the *Past*—the *remote* Past, with its race-memories of the forest primeval, or the immediate Past, with its recollections of *cosy* rugs, noble feasts, and fond caresses. But they never dream dreams of the Future-such dreams as fire the fancy of the architect and the engineer.

There are few triumphs of constructive ingenuity more amazing than a beaver's dam, an eagle's nest, or a bee's comb. Yet about these wonders of the builder's skill, two things must be said.

The *first* is that there is nothing to show that the beavers that are constructing their dams at this moment on the upper reaches of the Susquehanna are building those dams any more cleverly than the beavers that were operating there in the days of the Pharaohs; there *is* nothing to show that the eagles that are building their nests at this moment among the lofty *crag*s of our Australian Grampians are building those nests any *more* cunningly than the eagles of which Moses and David sang; there is nothing to show that the bees that are framing their exquisite little cells of wax in our modern hives are doing it any more daintily or symmetrically than the bees that earned for Palestine the name of 'a land flowing with milk and honey'.

And the *second* thing that must be said is still more significant. Can anybody imagine a beaver, squatting on its haunches beside some American waterway, watching the other beavers building a dam, being suddenly inspired by a magnificent vision? He sees at *aglance* that the methods being employed below him are hopelessly out-of-date. He is fired by a conception of bigger, better, brighter dams! He communicates his exciting idea to his companions! The

whole **system** of dam-construction is revolutionized on the instant!

Can anybody imagine an eagle, perched on some dizzy **eyrie** among the Grampians, watching a pair of eagles building their nest on a shelf below, being suddenly seized by an inspiration? He **sees** in a flash how a far finer nest could be built in half the **time!** Of course! He communicates his discovery to the other birds; and, from that moment, all the processes of nest-building are revised and re-cast!

Can anybody imagine a contemplative bee pondering the absurdity of perpetuating endlessly the methods of antiquity? Why should these shapely little cells be so slowly and laboriously fashioned? Why not turn them out by mass production? To be sure! And from that date the apiaries of the world are transformed!

No; we cannot imagine such scenes. Beavers do not dream; birds do not dream; bees do not dream. Nothing dreams--but Man. And why does Man dream? That is the question of questions. Why does Man dream? He dreams because he is made *in* the image of God, and God is the greatest Dreamer in the universe.

III

Man is a dreamer. God is a dreamer. And of what do they dream? They dream of each other. Man is for ever and for ever dreaming of God. No race or tribe has ever been discovered so barbaric and degraded that it has never received or conceived any vision of the Most High. And, as the Bible shows by its progressive unfoldings, God has been eternally dreaming of Man.

Like a pair of lovers, these two--Man and God: God and Man--have been dreaming through the ages of one another; and, the more they have become alienated from one another, the more romantic and tantalizing their dreams have become.

Man dreams of God. *It* shall *even* be, Isaiah says, as *when a hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty.* Humanity is characterized by two tremendous factors--its hunger

and its dreams. Man is hungry, desperately hungry. Come upon him where you will, and, savage or sage, you will find him craving something beyond him, something above. And, hungry as he is, he dreams. He dreams of universal conquest. He reads the secrets of the stars; he wrests the records from the rocks; he rides above the clouds; he sails beneath the seas; he flings his messages into infinite space; and, still unsatisfied, he dreams of flights yet more daring.

There lies on my desk at this moment a copy of *The Great Hunger*, by Johan Bojer. John Galsworthy thought it one of the most notable novels written in our time. It is, of course, a Norwegian story, the story of Peer Holm, a boy whose birth was the shame of his parents and who had very little in the way of an upbringing. His was a rough boyhood. Whilst still very young, he cherished a passionate desire to be a priest, not because of any strong religious convictions, but because of a quenchless longing for something that, as a priest, he fancied he might find. He loved metals and, lured by his fancy, drifted into an engineering shop. But everything that he touched seemed instinct with subtle suggestions of something greater behind it—the something for which he was so hungry.

Becoming a famous engineer, he was sent abroad to build great dams and bridges and aqueducts. But every new triumph of his skill fastened upon his mind two convictions. The first was that, in actual fact, he was a priest after all—a priest in steel. By all these masterpieces of his he was simply reaching out hands into the infinite and harnessing its mystic powers to the needs of his fellow-men. And the second conviction amounted to a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction. Even though the world was ringing with his praise, he felt that he had only touched the fringe of things. There was something beyond—the something for which he had hungered as a boy.

He married. Nothing could have been more beautiful than his wedded life with Merle. He loved her with all his soul and she loved him just as devotedly. Three children came into their home, and, if any man should have been happy, Peer should have

Yet his joy was clouded. He felt that there was something behind the love of his wife, a greater love of which it was only an **outward** and visible expression. If only he could find, not merely happiness, but the source of his **happiness!**

Peer loses all his money: he and his Merle are reduced to poverty: they have to send two of their children away: they are left in a cottage with their youngest, a girl. They do not rebel: have they not still each other and little Asta? Yet the hunger is still there.

In their lowliness they have an enemy. The brazier, who lives next door, is a wizened little creature who, hating everybody, is by everybody hated. He owns a big ugly wolf-dog, and one day the horrid beast flies at little Asta and kills her. Peer and Merle seek comfort in an intensified affection for each other. But it is enough. Peer still craves something intangible, inaudible, invisible-something beyond.

One day he looks from his window on the brazier's unsown field. Why is it unsown? It is unsown because the brazier is too poor to buy seed. He begs for some; but the people detest him too much to give him any. Peer has a bag of barley. Why not sow it in his neighbour's field? He rises in the moonlight. Merle, not grasping his purpose, is frightened and insists on accompanying him. The ground is wet after recent rain. Peer sows the barley in the brazier's field. But why?

That is the question: why? It is not for his own sake; what has he to gain by it? It is not for the brazier's sake; he hates the very sight of the man, as does everybody in the district. Then why has he done it? He must have been moved by some impulse-an impulse from a source outside himself! From what **source?** And so, in sowing his seed in his neighbour's field, Peer Holm at last finds God. And then he realizes that it was for God that he had always hungered; it was of God that he had always **dreamed!**

And God dreams of Man. Think of the divine dream of the making of Man-a thing of almost boundless intellect and of terrifying prerogatives!

Think of the divine dream of the immensities of Creation! The

most splendid palace that any Oriental bridegroom planned for his queenly bride becomes microscopic and infinitesimal as we contemplate this network of infinities in which God designed to dwell with Man.

Think of the divine dream of the Redemption of Man. We say that Christ died on Calvary. But he is *the* Lamb *slain from the foundation of the world!* Before a flower bloomed or a bird sang, God was dreaming His dreams of Paradise Regained. Or look at another of these classical redemptive phrases, He *shall* see of *the travail* of His soul *and shall be satisfied*, says the Prophet concerning the Suffering Saviour. The travail of His soul! What dreams a woman dreams concerning the baby that is coming! And the dreams that she dreams when it is coming fit her to see in it, when her travail is past, a beauty that no other eyes can detect. He shall *see of the travail of His soul*. And when He sees the Church of His travail, He sees in it the Church that nobody else sees, the Church of His dreams, the Church that satisfies and delights Him!

And think of the divine dream of Heaven! Here it is at the end of the Bible! The Bible itself is a dream—a dream that ends in a dream. It ends in a dream because the reality is so radiantly and divinely beautiful that only in dream-lore can *its* wonders be expressed.

So, here you have the two inveterate dreamers—God and Man! A man’s most glorious dream is the dream of himself as God dreams of him. Like Tennyson, in *Maud*, we sigh:

Ah, for a man to arise in me
That the man I am may cease to *be!*

And the essential wonder of the everlasting gospel is that the divine dream concerning me—the dream that corresponds with my choicest dreams concerning myself—may be realized! Jesus came into the world to seek and to save me; to set me free, that is to say, from the tyranny of sordid actualities and lift me to the level of my loveliest dreams.

Chapter IX

Abide With Me!

YOU would scarcely think that this pretty blue bay, with its rocky coast and its graceful sweep of crescent beach, had witnessed anything worth talking about. Yet it was from these rugged cliffs that the men of Devon watched the great galleons of the Spanish Armada as they made their way into the Channel in 1588. It was in this very bay that William of Orange landed with his army exactly a century later and made himself King of England. It was in these quiet waters that the *Bellerophon*, with Napoleon as a prisoner on board, anchored for several days on her way to St. Helena in 1815. And it was on this secluded beach that one of the very greatest of our hymns was composed. *Abide with me* was written, on the night on which he closed his ministry, by Canon Henry Francis Lyte, who was for a quarter of a century Vicar of Brixham Parish Church—the church that you see up there on the hill.

Lyte was a cosmopolite. Of English parentage, he was born in Scotland and educated in Ireland. And in Ireland he commenced his ministry. The tiny village of Ednam, near Kelso, not far from the Tweed, holds the extraordinary distinction of having produced three poets of renown—James Thomson, who wrote *Rule Britannia*; Thomas Campbell, who wrote *Ye Mariners of England*; and Henry Francis Lyte, who wrote *Abide with me*.

As a boy, Henry dreamed of being a doctor, and actually became a medical student. But, whilst still *in* his 'teens, he passed through a profound *religious experience* which turned his mind in quite another direction. Of that transforming experience he has told us in his hymn, although, perhaps because of its personal character, the verse is never included in any of our collections:

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
'Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.

Following upon this experience, he devoted himself to study for the ministry, and, in 1815—the year of Waterloo—he settled as curate at Wexford in Ireland. He was then twenty-two.

I

It was at Wexford that the hymn was really born, although it was not until many years later that it took definite shape. He **did not stay long in** that first curacy of his; but he made fast friends in the district; and in 1820 he revisited the scene of his first ministry as the guest of the Hore family. Hearing that an old acquaintance, William Augustus Le Hunte, was desperately ill, he hurried off to see him. The dying man had enjoyed a particularly vivid realization of his Lord's presence and grace; but was haunted, during his sickness, by the fear of losing **it**. He dreaded lest he should be left to tread the dark valley alone. Every now and again he would close his eyes, clasp his hands, and exclaim fervently: 'Oh, abide with me; abide with me; abide with me!' Mr. Le Hunte's fear of being forsaken at the last made an indelible impression on the sensitive mind of the young clergyman sitting by his bedside; and, although he said very little about it, his dying friend's pathetic entreaty echoed in his soul through all the years.

It was in **1823**, at the age of thirty, that Mr. Lyte settled at Brixham in Devonshire, the fishing village with the **colourful** historic associations. He loved the sea; he loved the **fisherfolk**; and he quickly won the affection of all the people along the coast. Nothing pleased him more than to saunter along the beach, to perch on the side of one of the boats, and to chat with ~~the~~ men as they arranged their nets and tackle. He spent nearly a quarter of a century among them, and, the longer they knew him, the more highly they esteemed him.

He was, however, heavily handicapped. Although he contrived, by frequently wintering abroad, and by keeping in constant touch with his doctors, to live to the age of fifty-four, he was always pitifully frail. A victim of consumption, his lungs were in ruins and had to be incessantly coaxed or scourged into doing their duty.

Looking as if a puff of wind would blow him away, he seemed to be always coughing. Knowing that his day must be a brief one, he wondered in what way he could make it memorable and serviceable. This problem occupied his thought continually. And then he had a brain-wave: an idea suddenly flashed upon him. He fancied that he saw a way in which he could outwit the brevity of life and challenge the tyranny of the tomb.

II

He had always been passionately fond of expressing himself tunelessly. The making of melodious verses fascinated him. Would it be possible, he wondered, to employ this gift of poesy in such a way that his influence would linger on for many years after his fragile body had been laid to rest? The more he thought about it, the more the idea gripped him. He set his daring aspiration to music. Why, he asks, should he shrink from an early death? If only, before dropping into his grave, he could produce something that should live for ages! If, he sings:

If I might leave behind
Some blessing for my fellows, some fair trust,
To guide, to cheer, to elevate my kind
When I am in the dust.

Might verse of mine inspire
One virtuous aim, one high resolve impart,
Light in one drooping soul a hallowed fire
Or bind one broken **heart!**

O Thou, whose touch can lend
Life to the dead, Thy quickening grace supply
And grant me, swanlike, my last breath to spend
In song that may not die!

The thought, which was at first but a nebulous and abstract dream, crystallized into a definite purpose, an inflexible resolve; and, every day of his life, he prayed that he might be permitted to realize his lofty ambition. And his prayer was magnificently answered.

Abide with me, **fast** falls the eventide;
 The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
 When **other** helpers fail, and comforts flee,
 Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
 Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
 Change and decay in all around I see;
 O Thou who **changest** not, abide with me.

Hastening back to his study, he wrote out **the** stanzas that had swept into his sod as he paced the sands: and handed the paper to a friend. He left England the following week, and died at Nice two months later. A beautiful marble cross marks his grave on that southern shore.

IV

Dame Clara Butt once made a list of the songs that, in the course of her career, she had found most appealing. She had not the slightest hesitation in putting *Abide with me* first of all. Nothing that she ever sang, she declared, so moved the hearts of her audiences.

In that amazing expedition over slippery glaciers and tossing icefloes of which he has told in *South*, Sir Ernest Shackleton confronted perils that he and his companions regarded as absolutely insuperable. But, when death stared them most confidently in the face, they became vividly conscious of the divine presence and protection. The immanence of the Son of Man was as real to them amidst Antarctic snows as it was to the three Hebrew children in the burning fiery furnace. The story, as Shackleton tells it, is one of the most thrilling passages in our literature of travel. When the explorer unfolded it before his great London audiences, his hearers held their breaths: you could have heard a pin drop.

The memory of that unforgettable experience was strongly upon Shackleton when he prepared for his last-and fatal-voyage. It was not his custom to take anything with him with which he could possibly dispense; but he insisted on including among his treasures a gramophone record of Dame Clara Butt's rendering of

Abide with me. He wanted to be assured in that melodious way that the invisible Companion of his former expedition would constantly attend him on this one. 'Just think,' commented a journalist at the time, 'just think of those words and of that music—I need Thy presence every passing hour—ringing out across the icebound wastes of the Antarctic !' It was Shackleton's one thought and it grew upon him towards the close. As he lay dying, he asked for the record, and listened with strained and reverent attention to the voice of Clara Burt singing:

I need Thy Presence every passing hour;
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
 Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
 Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes;
 Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
 Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
 In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Now, whilst Sir Ernest Shackleton was undergoing his sensational experiences in South Georgia and on Elephant Island, Nurse Edith Cavell was awaiting execution in her cheerless prison cell at Brussels. Mr. Gahan, the British Consul, called to take a last farewell of her. He and she repeated, very softly and very slowly, the verses of *Abide with me*. When at length the moment of parting came, she clasped his hand and said with a lovely smile: 'We shall meet again—heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee!' She then turned away, murmuring to herself under her breath—'in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!'

To-night-and every night-at eight o'clock, the bells of Canon Lyte's old church at Brixham peal out the strains of *Abide with me* for the comfort and inspiration of the men of the fishing fleet as they put to sea. To-night-and every night-the words find a responsive echo in the wistful hearts of all who hunger for the divine companionship. The hymn assures them that, so long as the world stands, no man need be lonely who will extend the hospitalities of his soul to One who loves to abide with **all** who court His company.

Chapter X

A Preacher's Potpourri

THIS chapter is essentially a potpourri—a kind of bubble-and-squeak or Irish stew or hotch-potch or Madras curry—call it what you will. It is one of those dishes into which you pour an extraordinary medley of heterogeneous ingredients, with, at times, a very pleasing result. I shall begin with a private letter that I received more than fifty years ago: I shall then make a brief excursion into *History*; I shall have something to say about *Politics*; I shall discuss the basic principles of **Art**; I shall venture upon a study of *Mathematics*; and I shall finish up by telling a story from my own earlier experience.

First, then, the letter! The letter was addressed to me in the days when I was preparing to leave the dear old Homeland for my life-work in this hemisphere. During my college days, I had been student-pastor at a pretty little village in Epping Forest—a pretty little village from which I brought away a pretty little villager as a souvenir. But she was not the only souvenir that I brought with me. I brought this letter and have treasured it, with others of a similar character, for more than half a century. Here it is: it bears a date in 1894:

'Dear Sir, I hear that you are leaving England shortly. I am truly sorry. I can only pray that God will be with you wherever you go, and work through you in pointing men to Christ, as you did me. I suppose you remember preaching on "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"'. HOW your words sank into my heart I can scarcely tell. Wherever I went, day and night, the words were always in my mind. I had no peace. I could not sleep: indeed, I was afraid to fry. I used to walk about in the night. I tried to mend my life and turn over a new leaf; but all that failed.

Then you told me to come to Christ just as I was. I did. I saw the light and received salvation. I found the peace I had longed for. The burden was gone. How happy I was! By His grace I will trust Him to bring me home safe at last. W. LUCK.'

Soon after I left England, Mr. Luck became an officer of the Church and won the affection and esteem of all who knew him until, quite recently, he was called Home.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! That brings me to my excursion into History. For I am mixing this pot-pourri of mine on the fourth of July, The whole world is to-day reviewing the romantic and colourful drama of American history. And on what is that brave record based? It is based, as any American citizen will tell you, on the never-to-be-forgotten adventure of the Pilgrim Fathers. And why does the world cherish the story of that handful of men and women who crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower* and landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620? 'The granite boulder on to which they stepped as they landed has become an object of veneration,' says Professor S. R. Gardiner in his *History of England*. 'Fragments of it are treasured with a reverence scarcely less than that which, in Catholic countries, is bestowed upon the relics of the saints. The Pilgrim Fathers', Professor Gardiner continues, 'hold a place in the annals of a mighty nation from which they can never be removed.' And why? 'It is not', Gardiner declares, 'because they were the founders of a great people. It is because, in spite of everybody and everything, they sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' They sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness: and, as a result, the American nation, with all that the American nation means to civilization, has been added unto them.

I

I said that I would have something to say about Politics. My dictionary defines 'politics' as the science of government; but the beginning and the basis of all government is self-government.

How can I govern anything or anybody until I have learned to govern myself?

That was what Jesus meant when He said that the kingdom of God-the kingdom which you must seek first-is within you. The biographer of Henry Drummond tells how he was once the honoured guest of a lady who was greatly perturbed about her coachman. He was really a very excellent and reliable man; but, every now and again, *his* fondness for drink entirely enslaved him. 'He will be driving you to the station,' the lady said to her guest in taking farewell of him; 'perhaps you could have a word with him!'

It chanced that, in the course of that final drive, something startled the horses and they bolted. The carriage was thrown first this way and then that; and Professor Drummond expected every moment to be his last-but the coachman handled the situation with such consummate skill that, eventually, he drew up the horses, steaming with perspiration, and, heaving a sigh of infinite relief, wiped his own forehead and exclaimed that it had been a close shave.

'It was, indeed,' agreed Henry Drummond; 'they are magnificent beasts, but they need a strong hand on the reins. And, by the way, George, I hear that there are times when you yourself get as badly out of control as those two horses were a moment ago. I owe my life to the way you handled those reins. Now let me tell you something. You need someone to grasp the reins of your own life, George; and, take my word for it, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can manage it.' Drummond jumped down and hurried into the station to catch his train; but the coachman always afterwards said that he owed his **sod's** salvation to the words that Professor Drummond uttered that day.

Politics is the science of government: the essence of government is self-government: and the only way in which a man can be sure that he himself is well and wisely governed is by crowning Christ King. *The kingdom of God is within you. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*

II

I promised to mix into this potpourri a discussion of the foundation principle of Art. I notice in this morning's paper a critique of an art exhibition now being held in this city. The critic says that the pictures reveal real genius and make up a singularly beautiful collection; but, he adds, they are marred to some extent by the uniformity with which the painter has selected dark and even black backgrounds.

That struck me as very significant. The dark background represents the artist's jealousy for his subject. His subject is, let us say, a bowl of roses. He is so anxious for us to see his roses—and nothing else—that he sets them against a black background. Another painter will furnish the roses with a dim background of other flowers or other vases. There is danger either way. The painter who fills the background with other flowers leaves his roses half-lost in the crowd; and if he make his supporting effects too attractive, the roses may be, not half-lost, but lost entirely. On the other hand, the black background is too severe; and, in the absence of all other objects, the roses gain nothing by a comparison that might easily but subtly have been introduced.

Seek ye *first*. The kingdom of God is to have pre-eminence in my life; but it is not to be alone. That was the mistake of the monks. Monasticism is the religion of the black background. The monk says--Religion and nothing else! At the opposite extreme is the man who makes his religion one of a multitude of interests. All occupy places of equal prominence in his heart. As a consequence, religion, like the roses, is lost in the crowd.

But Jesus says: Seek ye *first the kingdom of God*, Have your home and your business and your sport and all your other interests and delights: touch life at as many points as possible: but let your religion be like the roses in the perfectly-balanced picture, standing out bravely as the most alluring object on the canvas.

III

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. All these things shall be added—this presents us with our study in Mathematics.

The New Testament conception of the Christian life is a life of constant augmentation, constant enrichment, constant addition. The tendency, of course, is the other way. 'We are ailing in danger of losing the best as life goes on. We are like the man who, on entering the kingdom of God, feels that his pockets are filled with gold, but that he has holes in them all. Have we not all lost something of the rapture that flooded our souls at the time of our conversion? Have we not lost something of the radiance of our first simple faith in Jesus? We ministers, have we not lost something of the devotion that first impelled us toward the ministry? Have we not lost something of the passion that burned in our hearts at the time of our ordination? The years are great thieves; they creep upon us with stealthy footsteps and filch away our treasure.

Peter begins his second epistle by instructing his converts to make their experience a constant process of addition. *Add to your faith virtue, and add to virtue knowledge*, and so on. Add! says Peter. Do not let life be a constant subtraction, a continuous depletion, a steady draining away of spiritual vitality; but let it be an uninterrupted growth, a steady enrichment. Go from good to better, and from better to best. It is impossible to give what you yourself do not possess: you cannot lift others above your own level. Grow, therefore, in grace and in gladness. *Add*, day by day, to your soul's rich store. *Add; add; add!* And the secret of this perennial process of addition, Jesus says, is putting first things first. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*, and you will find yourself adding, adding, adding all the time!

IV

And now for the story with which I promised to complete the confused ingredients of this potpourri. When I settled at

Mosgiel in New Zealand in 1895, I had in my congregation a girl of about sixteen or seventeen, who seemed particularly interested and particularly attentive. She was one of the brightest and liveliest girls about the place, and yet, at times, she exhibited extraordinary seriousness and an indefinable wistfulness.

I often spoke to her, especially at the close of services in *which* the evangelistic note had been stressed: but it seemed futile. She told me that she longed to be a decided Christian: yet nothing would induce her to set out on pilgrimage.

This state of things persisted during the entire period of my Mosgiel ministry. I saw her fall in love and become engaged: I officiated at her wedding: I watched her fondness for her husband and her little children. These profound experiences neither quenched nor intensified her secret longing for something higher still. Nobody was more faithful in attendance at the services: nobody more eager to assist in any way within her power-but that was as far as it went.

After twelve years I accepted the call to Hobart. The farewell meeting was a heart-rending experience. When it was over, we returned to the Manse. But the Manse was a bleak wilderness of bare floors, vacant walls, and stacks of packing cases. In view of the discomfort around, and the emotional strain within, I decided to take a walk before attempting to sleep.

I had *not* gone far when, to my astonishment, I heard the **sound of weeping**. Following the direction indicated, I found, in a gap in the hedge, my friend of so many years, crying as if her heart would break.

'To think', she exclaimed, 'that I was so near to the kingdom when you came twelve years ago, and that I'm not a Christian yet!'

I tried to comfort her; but there was only one way of doing it. I urged her to yield to the Saviour then and there. And she did. She has since set an example to *all* around her by her beautiful and consecrated life; but I happen to know that it is still her deep regret that, instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, she let the years of her opportunity slip away and only surrendered to her Lord when her sun was high in the sky,

Wherefore let no man waste time. Time is the stuff of Eternity. A second of time may colour a pageant of ages. It is for me to seek, and to seek first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, confident that, if I do so, everything else that is worth while shall be added unto me.